

# **Strategies of encomium in Statius' *Silvae***

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## **DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP**

**I Giulia Brunetta hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.**

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**Date:**     14/06/2013

## ABSTRACT

### Strategies of encomium in Statius' *Silvae*

The present work is an examination of the rhetoric of encomia in the *Silvae*, a collection of occasional poems written by Publius Papinius Statius during the age of the emperor Domitian. The analysis focuses in particular on the features of the language of praise and its construction, with particular attention to recurrent patterns and themes. Given the variety of poems included in the *Silvae*, a selection has been made based on some of the main themes featured in the collection.

Therefore, the first two chapters of the thesis examine the strategies of encomium in the context of the imperial court of Domitian. The representation of the figure of the emperor is analysed together with some relevant representatives of his entourage, such as officers and favourite slaves. My aim is to offer a detailed analysis of the strategies employed by Statius through the medium of poetry of praise to offer an interpretation of the reality of the Domitianic era. Given the prominence of these poems in the *Silvae*, a further distinction has been made within this group between poems directly addressed to the emperor, and poems indirectly connected with the imperial figure.

The third chapter of the thesis examines the more private sphere represented in the collection. The choice of the poems has been made once again according to relevant themes (domestic scenarios, patronage). This part of the thesis explores the strategies of praise employed in encomia of private patrons or friends of the poet's. The aim is to show the presence of patterns in the interpretation of the encomiastic genre, and to value the experimentations that Statius carries out both in terms of poetic style and themes.

In the last chapter, a further intertextual comparison with some selected satires of Juvenal concludes the work.

The thesis aims to be an important contribution within the field of Statian studies, and to offer in particular a re-valuation of the *Silvae* as a most relevant and interesting interpretation of the reality of the empire.

# STRATEGIES OF ENCOMIUM IN STATIUS' *SILVAE*

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Giulia Brunetta

## Introduction

(...) *Satelles. Fama te populi nihil  
adversa terret? At. Maximum hoc regni bonum est,  
quod facta domini cogitur populus sui  
tam ferre quam laudare. Sat. Quos cogit metus  
laudare, eosdem reddit inimicos metus.  
at qui favoris gloriam veri petit,  
animo magis quam voce laudari volet.  
At. Laus vera et humili saepe contingit viro,  
non nisi potenti falsa. quod nolunt velint.*

(Seneca, *Thy.* 204-212)

In the last decades, the *Silvae* of Statius have been object of a renewed interest in the study of encomiastic and more generally imperial poetry. Nevertheless, if such attention to an often underrated poet like Statius has represented good news in the field of Latin studies, for a long time the interpretation of the *Silvae* seemed to have been constrained into two main directions: 'hyperbolic praise' and 'subversive satire'. In the first interpretation, supported primarily by Vessey often Statius (but also Martial) were identified as patronised poets, who composed poetry on commission. According to this view, Statius was classified as a 'sycophant' who used flattery as a passive instrument of praise<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, the second interpretation of encomium as 'subversive satire' developed the theory of 'figured language' as the necessary way for literature to deal with a tyrannical power. This idea was firstly supported by Garthwaite 1978 and Ahl 1984, who theorised that the *Silvae* represented an oblique way to show independence and opposition to the autocratic power of Domitian. Despite granting to the poet a certain degree of poetic authority (but again, subversive), this line of enquiry failed to recognise encomia as an autonomous initiative to construct reality. In this line of interpretation, until recently the most relevant contribution was the monograph by Carole Newlands "Statius' *Silvae* and the poetics of the empire", which still represents a fundamental study of this collection of occasional poetry<sup>2</sup>. Newlands' approach to the poetics of Statius is mainly based on the deconstruction of the poetic material and on exploring the elements of disturbance and discontinuity (which she refers to as 'faultlines') in Statius' encomiastic strategy. More recently, Newlands has published another monograph on Statius,

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<sup>1</sup> For the idea of Statian 'mannerism' and 'sycophancy' see Vessey 1973 and 1982. On this Newlands 2002, pp. 18 ff. is useful. See also Rosati 2011b.

<sup>2</sup> Two other German monographs on Statius and Martial have been published after Newlands. Leberl 2004 offers a comprehensive analysis of Domitian's attitude towards court poetry; Rühl 2006 is an analysis of the poetic occasions in the *Silvae* with attention to the role of the poet. Both works are very well informed and useful, but possibly lacking truly new contributions. Finally, Zeiner 2006 examines the *Silvae* as a form of 'material culture', with special regard for the representation of wealth.

focussing in particular on his relationship with Naples and his reception as *auctor* in the middle ages<sup>3</sup>. In this book, Newlands seems to have abandoned her subversive interpretation of the *Silvae*, and moved towards a more balanced reading, as it emerges e.g. on p. 28: “one approach to praise poetry is to accept that it employs a richly figurative language that is not necessarily subversive or adulatory but invites multiple levels of reception”.

Newlands’ new perspective is indeed a sign of the general direction that the studies of the *Silvae* have recently taken. My thesis originated as a response to Newlands’ ‘subversive’ approach, and in a way her recent change of attitude towards Statius seems to confirm that the examination of encomiastic language is not always straightforward. The critical methodology employed in her previous monograph had in fact proved itself to be discontinuous. The analysis of ‘faultlines’ in the encomiastic discourse is conveniently used to legitimate the presence of doublespeak where needed. Whenever Statius’ language cannot be asserted directly as ambiguous, Newlands relies again on the theory of faultlines borrowed from Sinfield<sup>4</sup> to suggest contradictions that emerge despite the poet’s intention<sup>5</sup>. Paraphrasing Sinfield, Newlands in fact states that “‘faultline stories’ insistently address the awkward and unresolved issues that are situated within every dominant discourse”. However, by implying the presence of doublespeak in the encomiastic language of Statius, Newlands finds a very convenient way to make flattery less problematic and antipathetic. Her intent to free Statius’ poetry from a connotation of passive praise of power has to be appreciated, but her interpretation of Statius’ claimed hidden criticism fails to convince, for it misconstrues the essence of encomium.

My present contribution to the study of Statius’ *Silvae* aims to offer a third possible approach to the *Silvae*: not crudely hyperbolic as the traditional view argues, nor ironical and subversive, as previously supported by Newlands, but rather ironical and sophisticated. This particular view is based on the notion that poet, addressee and audience share a ‘circle of complicity’, thus representing Statius as a privileged ‘insider’ of the world of the court. My approach aims to ‘tear away the mask’ from a negative perception of language of praise: the quotation from Seneca that opens my thesis offers a crude definition of a successful praise of a ruler: *laus vera et humili saepe contingit viro, non nisi potenti falsa* (a humble man can have a true praise, a ruler only a false one)<sup>6</sup>. I will argue that Statius’ encomiastic strategy can in fact be

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<sup>3</sup> Newlands 2012. This volume has reached me only in January 2013, as I was finishing my thesis. I am currently working on a review of the book for the Bryn Mawr Classical Review.

<sup>4</sup> Newlands 2002, pp. 23-25 on Sinfield 1992.

<sup>5</sup> An example of this can be found on p. 59, in the comparison between the Trojan horse and the equestrian statue of Domitian: “the comparison of the Trojan horse...creates a ‘faultline’, a fissure that reveals a gap between the noble myth of military success and containment and the lurking threat of indiscriminate power and violence. Despite the poet’s protestations, there lurks beneath the dominant discourse of praise an uncertainty about the meaning of Domitian’s statue and the concept of power it embodies.”

<sup>6</sup> This passage has been quoted in other discussions as the paradox of an autocratic power. See e.g. Bartsch 1994 and Rosati 2011a.

interpreted according to these ‘rules of the game’, for which encomia participate in an idealised perception of the *laudandi*. I will draw the limits by which this type of praise is not flattery, but acts like a model of behaviour that the encomiast imposes on his addressees.

Another important question that my thesis will strive to answer is in what terms this irony differs from the subversive irony of satire (primarily Juvenal) which voluntarily starts from a standpoint outside the ‘circle of complicity’. From these starting points, I hope that this thesis will contribute to the re-evaluation of the literature of praise which flourished under Domitian.

Recent reassessment of the cultural dynamics of the imperial period has examined with more attention the strategy through which the medium of poetry negotiates its own role with and in the world of the imperial court. It is not surprising, then, that the most recent contributions in the field of Flavian studies have taken the form of edited volumes, aimed at exploring the multifaceted reality of the poetic production of the Flavian poets (Statius, Martial, but also Silius Italicus and Valerius Flaccus).

I have observed that the influence of the epic works of Statius still features prominently in these studies of his poetry, and even analyses more focussed on the *Silvae* have dedicated much attention to the epic models and subtexts<sup>7</sup>. Although these are invaluable contributions to the understanding of the complex (textual) reality of the *Silvae*, in this direction the production of excellent commentaries on individual books and poems from the collection still represents the best tool for the occasional reader as well as for closer examinations of the poems<sup>8</sup>. Among these, the commentary on book 4 by Kathleen Coleman represents a fundamental study in asserting the playful and witty character of the poems, especially in the important imperial cycle of *Silv.* 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3. This commentary and Coleman’s article on the use of mythical voices in the *Silvae* have highlighted the wit and sophistication of Statius’ poetry, aspects which I aim to carry further in my analysis.

Despite the invaluable contributions of the commentaries and monographs to the understanding of the *Silvae*, a comprehensive analysis of the encomiastic patterns in the collection is still missing. Therefore, the present work aims to follow on the classification of speeches and

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<sup>7</sup> Cfr. in particular the contributions by Nauta, Rosati, Gibson, van Dam, Smolenaars in Nauta-van Dam-Smolenaars 2006, a miscellaneous volume which offers a comprehensive panoramic of the main streams of Flavian poetry. The book is a natural completion of the previous one in the series dedicated to Flavian Rome (Boyle-Dominik 2002). The special issue of *Arethusa* 2007 aimed at exploring Statius’ poetics of intimacy in the *Silvae*; however, the epic intertexts is still one of the recurrent features of the contributions in the volume: cfr. e.g. Lovatt, Bernstein, Hersch, Malamud. A new edited volume, “Brill’s companion to Statius” is forthcoming in 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Geyssen 1996 is a commentary on *Silv.* 1.1; Newlands 2011 is a new, more concise commentary of book 2, after the one by Van Dam 1984; Laguna 1992 is a commentary of book 3 (in Spanish); Pederzani 1992 offers commentaries of poems 1.2, 2.3 and 3.4 (in Italian); Coleman 1988 and Gibson 2006a are responsible for most excellent commentaries of book 4 and 5 respectively. Two translations of the *Silvae* have also been published: Shackleton-Bailey 2003 and Nagle 2004, aimed at a more general audience (hence the absence of the facing Latin text).



themes offered by the works of Coleman, Newlands and Rühl<sup>9</sup> (amongst others), and analyse in greater detail the lexicon of encomium in selected poems from the *Silvae*. The hope is that this work will eventually be integrated in a more extended treatment of encomiastic literature, with particular attention to the transition from the Republican and Augustan age to the Imperial periods. In this direction, attention will be paid to intertextual parallels such as Ovid and Juvenal. The influence of the former on the poetry of Statius has been noticed by the scholars in particular in the use of myth<sup>10</sup>. For example, my parallel analysis of the figure of Janus in *Silv.* 4.1 and *Fasti* 1 will explore more in detail how the two poets deal with the use of this mythical figure differently to pursue their poetic aim<sup>11</sup>. As for the confrontation with satire and Juvenal in particular, the influence of previous examples of this genre on the *Silvae* has already been examined for example in a contribution by Gabriel Laguna Mariscal<sup>12</sup>; however, a more detailed comparison with contemporary examples is also beneficial in understanding Statius' different employment of irony. A comprehensive comparative analysis of the use of language and style in the two imperial poets goes beyond the scope of this work; therefore, my discussion of intertextual correlations will be limited to main themes that are relevant in the cultural context in which the two poets operate, with special attention to the dynamics of patronage. The two opposed representations of the poet, inside (Statius) and outside (Juvenal) the dynamics of the court will cast a new light on the reason for the success of the peculiar type of language of power developed in the *Silvae*.

In order to do justice to the multifaceted nature of the collection, my methodological approach to the text is based on a close reading of individual poems<sup>13</sup>, aimed at defining in detail the working of the encomiastic language within the single composition, but also, on a broader level, how recurrent patterns work across the different literary genres represented in the collection. The choice of examining each poem as a self-contained unit follows the intent of analysing how the *topoi* of encomia codified by the ancient sources (Menander Rhetor in particular) work in different contexts. However, the discussion of groups of poems within the same chapter also aims at offering a comprehensive view of Statius' encomiastic strategy throughout the collection. My work aims at offering an ample analysis of how the encomiastic strategy (*topoi*, images, use of myth, imperial themes and new values) work on a microscopic and macroscopic level. Moreover, the examination of the use of encomiastic language in the public and private sphere also aims at casting a new light on the mutual interactions between the court-poet and his patrons. I will show how the irony and

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<sup>9</sup> Coleman 1988 and 1999; Newlands 2002; Rühl 2006; Hardie 2006 on Ovidian poetics in *Silv.* 2.3.

<sup>10</sup> Coleman 1988, p. xxvii. Newlands 2011, p. 5 mentions Statius' peculiar use of myth.

<sup>11</sup> On Janus, Domitian and the Roman calendar see also Newlands 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Laguna 2006.

<sup>13</sup> I am grateful to prof. Coleman for advising me to conduct my analysis by discussing individual poems of the *Silvae*.

humour of Statius' encomiastic language reflects a specific vision of the world he shares with his patrons and friends in a game of complicity.

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For these reasons, my examination of the *Silvae* is intended to explore their multifaceted characterization as a successful and sophisticated construction of the encomiastic discourse. My approach will show that the sophisticated language employed by Statius does not necessarily imply hidden feelings of anxiety or even subversiveness; on the contrary, I argue that the use of an exaggerated and transfigured language (especially in the imperial poems), becomes the true sign of an absolute power. In other words, the artificial image that encomia project paradoxically becomes 'more real than reality'. As Michael Dewar has argued about the proem to Lucan's *Pharsalia*<sup>14</sup>, panegyrics in fact do not aim to convey the truth, but to convey *a* truth, *i. e.* a specific vision of the world. For this reason, any debate about the reliability of encomia would misinterpret the very nature of the genre. In other words, a 'figured language' does not have to be necessarily interpreted as negative doublespeak, but rather as a complex rhetorical strategy to make praise unique and effective.

Interestingly enough, the ability of (and possibility for) the encomiast to offer a particular version of the truth to please the *laudandus* can be traced back to Pindar and Callimachus. In a thought-provoking article<sup>15</sup>, Lucia Floridi takes the opportunity to discuss this topic starting from a problematic verse of Callimachus' *Hymn to Zeus* (v. 65): ψευδοίμην ἄϊοντος ἃ κεν πεπιθοίεν ἄκουήν. The declaration implies that it is possible for the poet to create lies, if this does not affect the general positive outcome of the encomium. More in general, Floridi explains how Callimachus' adaptation of the myth of Zeus for the praise of Ptolemy Philadelphus recalls a poetic strategy already developed by Pindar<sup>16</sup>. Moreover, Callimachus seems also to be more aware of his audience, who is not the educated public of Pindar, but it is ultimately to be identified more likely with Ptolemy himself. In the new environment of the court, the ability of the poet to create an 'enhanced reality' is only legitimised when it does not displease the addressee. Moreover, the choice of employing poetic fiction in pursuing the encomiastic intention marks a clear distinction with prose panegyric, where this artifice is not possible, according to the famous statement of Isocrates (*Evagoras* (9. 9-11). In the context of our discourse, the presence of elements of falsity in encomia cannot be disregarded as dull flattery or, on the opposite, hidden criticism. Falsity and manipulation of the truth are intrinsic to panegyrics and participate in their success.

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<sup>14</sup> Dewar 1994, p. 209.

<sup>15</sup> Floridi 2004.

<sup>16</sup> Floridi, *ibidem*, pp. 70-71.

Against the background of the classic study of Francis Cairns on genres<sup>17</sup>, I will also examine how the language and style employed in the *Silvae* moves across the different genres (in Cairns' sense) represented in the collection. For this reason, the poems I have selected for the analysis of Statius' encomiastic strategy represent different types of occasional poetry: *ecphraseis*, *epikedia*, *propemptika*, thanksgivings, *epithalamia*. In discussing the poems, I will examine how the language of *amor/amicitia* is adapted to each context to offer an idealised vision of the world. Moreover, the portraits of the characters are also part of this strategy, and their idealisation leads to mixed models, or, to put it with Antonio La Penna's words<sup>18</sup>, 'ritratti paradossali' (paradoxical portraits). In creating an illusionary world where there are no social boundaries, the language of love aims to convey a sense of intimacy; such familiarity can assume different forms according to the context of the poem. Master-slave relationships are inscribed into father-son dynamics, while the patron-client interactions are described with a mixed imagery with borrowings also from erotic poetry. The reason behind such a complex strategy is once again encomiastic: the ultimate purpose of pleasing the addressee is interpreted by the poet as a 'courting game', in which the *laudandus* has to be 'conquered' by poetic means, in a way reminiscent of the efforts of the elegiac poets<sup>19</sup>. Therefore, it does not surprise that the language employed in the *Silvae* shows an intersection of lexicon between elegy and panegyric. I will analyse how the same complexity applies also to the characterisation of individuals in the collection, and how Statius shapes their features and words (when this happens) according to their role in the poem. This is not always a straightforward process: especially in the imperial poems, the encomiastic message can be filtered through the use of different poetic voices or characters. In this way, I will show how Statius strategically creates a triangle in which the addressee, the emperor and the poet interact on different levels.

### ***Flattery and negotiation of power***

For its ambiguous nature, the language of praise has always attracted antipathy and raised suspicion. In his oration on tyranny, Dio Chrysostom remarks the same idea by stating that it is impossible to praise a tyrant, because he thinks that who praises him feels otherwise (6. 59).

If the approach to the literature of praise is challenging for modern readers, even in ancient times the authenticity of encomia was regarded as a problematic issue.

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<sup>17</sup> Cairns 1972.

<sup>18</sup> La Penna 2000.

<sup>19</sup> For this notion of 'court' see Rosati 2003, p. 49.

In an important article on encomiastic literature of the Flavian age, Gianpiero Rosati has outlined the most relevant moments of the ancient debate on how to distinguish praise and flattery, with extracts from Isocrates, (*Ad Demonicum* and *Ad Nicoclem*), Plutarch (*How to distinguish a friend from a flatterer*), Cicero (*De amicitia*) and Dio Chrysostom (*Orat. 6, On tyranny*). The main argument emerging from these *exempla* is a neat distinction between praise, which is felt as genuine, and flattery, which is regarded as the enemy of truth. From the reflexions on the nature of tyranny (especially in the oration of Dio Chrysostom), the conclusion that it is impossible for the tyrant to receive true praise makes flattery (and flatterers) the worst enemy of the good ruler.

Is the dichotomy praise/flattery always an opposition between good and bad, truth and lie? Can any constructive value be attributed to the use of flattery? Starting from these general questions, my analysis of Statius' strategies of encomium in the *Silvae* offers a new perspective on the peculiar development of panegyric during the early years of the empire. Domitian's encouragement of apparently exaggerated and even tasteless, humorously ironical panegyric contributed to his later image as a 'bad' ruler. Yet the relationship between a ruler's moral quality and the strategies of his encomiasts is not always straightforward. In this sense my contribution to the study of the *Silvae* aims to revalue flattery as a fundamental trait of a successful encomiastic discourse. My examination of Statius' rhetoric of encomium will show how the traditional dichotomy between praise and flattery becomes more complicated when literature has to deal with an autocratic power.

The employment of flattery is in fact successful in a two-fold way: for the 'extreme' character, it heightens the praise of the addressee, thus making it successful, but it also imposes a model, a high standard that the recipient has to meet. In this way, the dynamics of negotiation between the encomiast and the court (be it the emperor or his political entourage) are not interpreted as a one-way phenomenon, *i. e.* an imposition for above, but as a mutual exchange of favours. This mechanism is well explained by Tony Spawforth in his chapter dedicated to the creation of the imperial court: "...no one could afford to opt out from the use of flattery, because they could not ensure their rivals for rewards would not use it. Indeed, the tendency will be to seek ever more extravagant and novel forms of flattery in order to outdo competitors for the favours of the emperor (...) (flattery) was not simply a mark of servility; it was also a powerful tool in the hands of the courtier to achieve his ends"<sup>20</sup>. In line with this approach, I will show how in the *Silvae* Statius employs flattery with these aims. It will be apparent that flattery cannot be dismissed as a negative or passive phenomenon of encomia, but that it represents a constructive rhetorical tool in its own respect.

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<sup>20</sup> Spawforth 2007, p. 137.

Why do encomia in the imperial period become increasingly excessive and unbelievable? I will address how the rhetorical strategy employed by Statius responds to two main issues an encomiast had to face when writing panegyrics during the imperial age. Firstly, the pressure to innovate a traditional genre that was codified in some of the main *topoi* of praise was already felt by poets like Callimachus and, in Augustan Rome, Horace<sup>21</sup>. Secondly, in order to emerge in the reality of the imperial court, the poet-client needed his panegyrics to be bold, memorable and original.

In line with this tradition, the divinisation of the ruler in particular soon became a *topos* that the encomiasts needed to innovate. The introduction of mythical or divine prosopopeia proved to be a successful strategy in asserting the divine nature of the sovereign. One of the first and most famous examples is notably the *Hymn to Delos* of Callimachus, where the unborn Apollo prophesies the birth and future reign of ‘another god’, *i.e.* Ptolemy Philadelphus (vv. 162-170). In his volume dedicated to the influence of Callimachus on Latin literature, Richard Hunter traces the gradual process that leads to the divine representation of the sovereign: from an initial comparison with a god to the complete identification of earthly and heavenly ruler<sup>22</sup>. This process finds a final consolidation with the Augustan poets<sup>23</sup>, and it is later absorbed by the imperial propaganda.

During the imperial age, the increasingly autocratic power of the emperor necessarily requires public propaganda to adapt to this new reality. Recent studies have in fact re-evaluated the mutual connection between the ruler and the court<sup>24</sup>, which does not passively receive impositions from above, but represents an important medium through which political power can be displayed. Court literature necessarily participates in these dynamics, and during the imperial period the distinction between praise and flattery becomes more blurred. The autocratic power held by the emperor leads to an ‘exaggeration’ of the language of praise, which gradually leaves space to a more open flattery.

The recent revaluation of the language of flattery as a constructive instrument of negotiation of power between the encomiasts and the court has also led to the interesting idea that in the imperial age falsity ends up becoming the very distinctive trait of encomia<sup>25</sup>, and any claim of

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<sup>21</sup> For the elements of innovation in Hellenistic poetry see Fantuzzi-Hunter 2004 and for Callimachus in particular Hunter 2006. For Augustan poetry in context see White 1993.

<sup>22</sup> Hunter 2006, pp. 94-95 ff.

<sup>23</sup> White 1993, p. 169 ff. argues that the divinisation of the ruler was not perceived completely as a new *topos*, hence poets like Horace innovated it, for example with the use of different voices for the delivery of the encomium. Undoubtedly the language of praise shifts from the Hellenistic courts to Augustan Rome, however, the impact of its application to the divine kingship of a single ruler cannot be underestimated in its novelty.

<sup>24</sup> Wallace-Hadrill 1996, and more recently, Spawforth 2007. especially chapt. 4 (pp. 121-156). See Rosati 2011a, p. 267 n. 9 for further bibliography.

<sup>25</sup> Rosati 2011a, pp. 276-278.

truthfulness gives way to an unlimited praise of an unlimited power. It is in this last aspect of falsity that in my opinion the key to the reading of encomiastic poetry lies.

In the enhanced reality that is often the scenario of encomia, the world is represented as upside down: the realm of Jupiter is no longer in heaven but identified with the empire on earth. Therefore, the frequent presence of mythical and divine figures in the reality of the empire becomes evidence of the divine nature of the court; at the same time, their employment as spokespersons represents an interesting *variatio* for the delivery of the encomium.

My approach to Statius' encomiastic strategy focuses on the poet's ability to combine the light character of the *Silvae* with their encomiastic intent. The use of multiple voices in the eulogies offers a unique opportunity to Statius to play with the poetic matter. In the analysis of the spokespersons and their speeches, I will show how the poet combines a humorous presentation of the character with a 'straight' encomium, making the praise at the same time pleasing and entertaining.

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A term that will often feature in this work is negotiation, which figures as a key-concept in the development of encomia and can be traced back again to the great celebratory poems of Pindar. In her study on Greek and Latin patronage Barbara Gold has argued that "the first-person statements in Pindar rarely refer to anything outside the framework of the poem, but pertain to the poetic theme being developed. Pindar by using the first person, insinuates himself into the theme and thus combines his own victory with his patron's triumph. He creates in himself another subject in the poem parallel to that of the patron"<sup>26</sup>. The negotiation of power between the author and the recipient is deeply rooted in encomia, hence the interest in this genre lies on the fact that it can offer an unique interpretation of the political, cultural and historical situation of a particular moment in time.

An important aspect of the negotiation between the poet and the world of the court is in fact the mechanism of the exchange of *beneficia*. The *epistulae* which open every book of the *Silvae* are particularly precious in giving details on the occasion, commission and composition of the individual poems<sup>27</sup>. The publication of the individual *Silvae* is the most direct evidence of the appreciation received; after all, it is logical to think that an encomiast writing inside the court and

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<sup>26</sup> Gold 1982, p. 23.

<sup>27</sup> For some considerations on Statius' prose prefaces as a way to promote the *Silvae* to the public see Newlands 2008. Johannsen 2006 offers a comprehensive (almost encyclopedical) analysis of the prose prefaces of the *Silvae* and more in detail of selected books of the *Epigrams* of Martial (1, 2, 8, 9, 12).

for the court aimed at pleasing his audience as well as the direct recipients of his poems. For their specific nature of ‘commissioned poetry’, that so often is remarked by Statius (*e. g.* 1 *praef.* 21 *iniunxeras*; 2 *praef.* 24 *imputari sibi voluit*; 3 *praef.* 18-20 *petisset... versibus dedicarem*)<sup>28</sup>, these poems can in fact be regarded as part of the strategy of gift-giving. During the imperial age, the traditional practice of exchange of *beneficia* adapts itself to the new social reality of the court, thus becoming increasingly asymmetric. In this context, the analysis of the imbalance between benefactor and beneficiary in Seneca’s *De beneficiis* has shown the relevance of this topic within the socio-cultural structure of the first century A.D.<sup>29</sup> As I have mentioned before and will discuss later in greater detail, the often practical aspect of the relationship between encomiast and recipient can be compared to a reciprocation of favours. However, when such mechanism is applied to the absolute power of the emperor, returning an imperial favour becomes a difficult but exciting task. For the court poet, reciprocating the favours of the emperor becomes an intrinsic component of composing poetry. When analysing occasional compositions such as the *Silvae*, being aware of these dynamics can prevent us from dangerous interpretations of the poet’s ego being superior and detached from the social reality. Commissioned poetry in fact is an important aspect in the private contexts of the *Silvae*, yet in the case of imperial commissions we cannot be certain of the reality behind the relationship between Statius and Domitian as a patron<sup>30</sup>. On the other hand, we cannot rely on encomia for a realistic description of the social dynamics occurring in the imperial age, since the language of praise developed by Statius (but also Martial) employs a richly figured vocabulary to describe power relationships. Scholars have been analysing the construction of this idealised language as a specific response to the increasingly autocratic character of imperial society<sup>31</sup>. The aim of the encomiast is clear: creating a virtual world where there are no conflicts or any social inequalities imposes an idea of leadership that the emperor has to fulfil. The paradox of a benevolent portrait of an autocratic society acts like a specific public imagery that is complimentary to the political authority while it also promotes poetry as a powerful medium of propaganda for the positive reception of the imperial power.

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One of the most important factors which make encomia a most interesting area of research is their ability to combine tradition with innovation, thus offering a unique view of a particular moment in time. The ‘fluid’ character of this literary genre was already acknowledged by Quintilian

<sup>28</sup> For further examples of Statius as a professional poet see Rosati 2012.

<sup>29</sup> See the recent interesting edited volume by Picone-Beltrami-Ricottoli 2009.

<sup>30</sup> On this see Seager 2010, pp. 370-372 and now Newlands 2012, pp. 20-35.

<sup>31</sup> Beside the classic article by White 1978, worth mentioning are Nagle 1980 and Rosati 2003 for the comparison between language of power and language of love.

in the *Institutio oratoria* (3.4.1-16). The author argues that despite belonging primarily to epideictic, panegyric can also play an advisory function, thus moving across the conventional tripartite division of oratory (epideictic, deliberative, forensic). This ‘educational’ trait of encomium however can become problematic when the encomiast deals with an autocratic ruler<sup>32</sup>. The broad application of encomiastic literature to different contexts and occasions necessarily looks back also at the great tradition of Greek lyric poetry (and Pindar in particular). It has to be noted that the impact of the Greek tradition (most notably Hellenistic poetry) is especially important in Statius’ own education and poetic production<sup>33</sup>.

For this specific adaptability to any context, the genre of encomium combines a rough set of recurrent patterns (*topoi*, figures of speech, *formulae*) with a vast employability in multiple contexts. As it has been often noted, a ‘standardisation’ of the characteristics of panegyric is a late phenomenon, of which the most complete example is the manual written by Menander Rhetor in the third century A.D.<sup>34</sup>.

The origins of Latin panegyric have been traced back to the *laudationes funebres*, which normally prescribed a specific set of *topoi* of praise. In considering the development of Latin encomiastic literature, a distinction can be made between prose and poetic panegyrics. Recent studies have identified among the first examples of prose encomia some speeches by Cicero (*Pro Marcello*, *Pro Ligario*, *Pro rege Deiotaro*)<sup>35</sup>, and a recent edited volume aimed at exploring the reality behind the language of praise in the oratory of the Roman republican period<sup>36</sup>. During the early imperial age, the *De clementia* of Seneca offers some reflections on the representation of the ideal ruler, and combines some Ciceronian features of praise and advice for the young Nero. The combination of philosophical precepts and notions of kingship acts in the *De clementia* both as a model and a reflection of actual qualities possessed by the emperor: all elements that we find in later imperial encomia. The most famous example of eulogy in prose from the later imperial period is without doubt the *Panegyricus Traiani* of Pliny the Younger. The choice of prose over poetry marks the desire to set Trajan aside from his predecessors (Domitian in particular), while also looking back at the Isocratean idea mentioned before in this introduction, according to which prose encomia always tell the truth without the embellishments of poetry. The celebration of Trajan after

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<sup>32</sup> E.g. in *Carm.* 3.4, Horace’s advice to Augustus reflects in fact the reality of the *princeps*’ military achievements.

<sup>33</sup> The most complete work in this direction is Hardie 1983. Coleman 1999 analyses some of the Hellenistic rhetorical features used by Statius in the encomiastic speeches in the *Silvae*. For a brief survey of panegyrics of rulers see also Coleman 1988, pp. 62-65.

<sup>34</sup> For a complete edition see Russell-Wilson 1981. For some considerations on selected passages see Cairns 1972, *passim*.

<sup>35</sup> Braund 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Smith-Covino 2011.



the Flavian encomiastic experimentations marks a return (or an attempt at one, as we shall see) to more traditional features of the genre.

If the distinction between prose and poetic encomia is certainly useful, however it has often led to the wrong assumption that poetry allows more licence and is therefore better adapted to private contexts<sup>37</sup>. On the contrary, as we have said, poetic encomia are most effective also when dealing with the political power and public settings, as my analysis of the *Silvae* will contribute to demonstrate.

The first relevant examples are to be found in the Augustan period. The *Panegyricus Messallae* comprises a series of *topoi* of encomium that will be found in later panegyrics, and even in Statius. The celebration of military achievements of the recipient and the role of the poet feature prominently in this poem, and mark an important model for later encomiasts. The other anonymous eulogy from this period is the *Laus Pisonis*, in which the dynamics of patronage are also exploited.

In the present thesis a comparative reading of Statius and the models of Virgil, Horace and Ovid will also cast some light on the development of the encomiastic language from the Augustan age to the imperial period. My analysis will be focused in particular on the employment of specific *topoi* for the imperial praise, *e.g.* the increasing identification of the emperor with Jupiter and the *topos* known as ‘*serus in caelum redeas*’, addressed to Augustus in a famous Horatian Ode (1.2). In line with this tradition, the post-augustan poets Statius and Martial therefore combine the Greek and Hellenistic tradition with the Augustan ‘Roman’ reformulation of the *logos basilikos*. The extremism of the imperial cult under Nero and later under Domitian reveals the increasing autocratic power of the emperor. As I will discuss in this work, the model of the literary circle of intimacy developed by Maecenas remains an ideal that the poet-clients (Statius, Martial, Juvenal) try to propose through their poetry.

As I have mentioned above, in analysing the history of Latin panegyrics it is noticeable that Pliny the Younger represents the best example of the difficult task of undertaking a ‘straight’ encomium after the Flavians. Throughout his *Panegyricus Traiani*, a *gratiarum actio* for the emperor Trajan delivered before the emperor and the senate in A.D. 100, the obsession to prove the honesty of the praise is apparent, and doublespeak is acknowledged as a risk involved in the use of flattery. Therefore, Pliny felt the need to stress the straightness of his language of praise (*Pan.* 3, 4): *non enim periculum est ne, cum loquar de humanitate, exprobrari sibi superbiam credat, cum de frugalitate, luxuriam; cum de clementia, crudelitatem; cum de liberalitate, avaritiam; cum de benignitate, livorem; cum de continentia, libidinem; cum de labore, inertiam; cum de fortitudine, timorem*. Pliny’s struggle in restoring the sincerity of encomium marks a point of non-return in the

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<sup>37</sup> Russell 1998, p. 40.

development of encomiastic language. How is it possible to demarcate the end of an era perceived as negative (Domitian) and celebrate a new one (Trajan) by employing the same language of praise? After the classic chapter of Shadi Bartsch<sup>38</sup>, in which the author identifies Pliny's anxiety in trying to establish the audience's confidence with the honesty of the 'public speech', a recent edited volume on the *Panegyricus* has gathered some excellent contributions that offer answers to these questions<sup>39</sup>.

With this work, I hope that the often misjudged language of praise in the *Silvae* will be re-established in its active function of negotiating its own role within the political and social sphere. Moreover, the peculiar representation of power presented by Statius reflects the problematic aspect of pretence and appearance in political contexts. In more modern times, some works on political theory have also dedicated discussions on this matter, and show evidence of its continuous relevance. In particular, during the Renaissance the Italian author Nicolò Machiavelli in his treatise *Il principe* dedicates two chapters (17-18) to instruct the ideal ruler (the prince of the title) on how to tell the good advisers from the bad ones. Machiavelli concludes these chapters by arguing that the ideal ruler should only pretend to show admirable qualities (piety, faith, humanity, integrity, morality), in order to reveal to the opposite when necessary. In a way, Machiavelli 'tears away the mask' and shows how pretence plays a fundamental role in positions of power. This extreme synthesis of what constitutes a successful leadership is only a further example of how a language of power like the one developed by Statius in the *Silvae* can be an effective instrument for constructing reality.

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In this last section of my introduction, I would like to explain more in detail the structure of the thesis. The first, macroscopic division into four chapters is based on the distinction between the 'public' imperial poems, *i. e.* poems involving the figure of the emperor (chapters I and II), 'private' poems, *i. e.* compositions involving patrons and friends of Statius (chapter III) and finally an intertextual analysis of Statius and Juvenal (chapter IV).

The first chapter aims at analysing the mythical or divine prosopopeia who deliver the encomium for Domitian. The order of the poems selected (*Silv.* 4.3, 4.1 and 1.1) is meant to explore

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<sup>38</sup> Bartsch 1994, pp. 148-187, now republished also in Rees 2012, pp. 148-193 with other valuable contributions on the *Panegyricus*.

<sup>39</sup> Roche 2011. I am referring in particular to the chapters of Manuwald and Gibson. In the context of this work Gibson's identification of Pliny's anxiety with the impossibility of avoiding a common language of praise inherited from the Flavian age strengthens the influence that Statius and Martial had in creating an effective strategy for imperial encomia.

how Statius engages with his literary models (Virgil and Ovid) in shaping his encomiastic strategy. In the analysis of the speeches delivered for the emperor, the employment of mythical spokesperson and the transfiguration of reality into a super-human dimension transfer the divine imperial imagery into the contemporary reality of Rome.

The second chapter opens with a new reading of *Silv.* 4.2, to introduce more in detail the theme of the transfiguration of reality and the celebration of the divinity of the emperor. In the analysis of more indirect allusions to Domitian, the discussion will also comprise the world of the court, represented by a favourite slave of the emperor's (*Silv.* 3.4), an imperial officer (*Silv.* 1.4), and two imperial couples (*Silv.* 1.2 and 5.1). In this group of poems, I will show how the encomium is perceived on different levels: a direct praise of the main addressee(s) is combined with constant references to the imperial figure, which is felt even *in absentia*. In these poems the employment of real characters as spokespersons represents a striking *variatio* of Statius' encomiastic strategy. Moreover, in these poems the role of the poet varies according to the degree of familiarity with the direct addressee. In *Silv.* 1.2 and 1.4 especially, a specific language of *amor* and affection is employed to secure to the poet a role of mediator between the imperial power and the recipient.

The third chapter of my thesis is dedicated to the 'private' poems in the *Silvae*. The selection of the compositions for this section is based on the transferability of the language of encomium analysed in the imperial poems into private eulogies. In the analysis of the *epikediton* from the second book of the *Silvae* (2.1) I will examine how the master-slave relationship is based on a mixed model of erotic tension and paternal love. I will argue that the encomiastic strategy develops here an ideal of a 'totalising love', which legitimises the affection for a slave and pushes the boundaries of grief. My reading of *Silv.* 3.2 will focus on the presence of elegiac borrowings in a *propemptikon*, in order to show once again how the language of *amor* is employed successfully by Statius to portray a relationship with a patron. The last section of the third chapter is dedicated to the theme of patronage. I will show how Statius praises private patrons with literary inclinations in a shared vision of the world, but also for the more practical reason of receiving patronage.

Finally, to conclude my thesis, the last chapter will be dedicated to the intertextual analysis of Statius and Juvenal on two different themes. A critical parallel examination of the two poets would deserve more space than this thesis allows, for its novelty and relevance in the analysis of poetry of the empire. The first section is dedicated to the *cena*, and the poems examined are the two *Silvae* describing different contexts of imperial banquets (4.2 and 1.6) and *Satire* 5 of Juvenal (describing a host behaving like a tyrant at a dinner-party). The poems refer to two opposite traditions in the representation of the good and the bad ruler. The analysis of some intertextual

parallels will help define through the lens of satire how Trajanic literature tried to deal with the negative image of power left by Domitian.

The second section of the chapter will focus on the different interpretation of Juvenal of the phenomenon of literary patronage during the imperial age, in comparison with the treatment of the same topic in Statius in chapter III. The lamentations of the satirist display a different reality for professional poets in the imperial age, and resorts to the imperial persona as the only viable source of patronage. The mention of Statius as the symbol of a successful court-poet acknowledges (even with ironical remarks) the power of flattery as an instrument of literary negotiation with the political power. I hope that this thesis will offer a new perspective on the reading of a piece of literature that for its complexity has attracted negative interpretations. I also hope that my constructive analysis of the strategies of encomium in Statius' *Silvae* will contribute more broadly to reevaluate a genre that is an effective instrument of negotiation of power, and not a passive reflection of the official propaganda.

With the hope that this work will be appreciated as a positive contribution to the discussion of the complex and fascinating world of the *Silvae*, I will conclude this introduction by sharing Horace's humorous (and timorous) exhortation to his newly published book (*Ep.* 1.20, 5-6): *fuge quo descendere gestis/non erit emissio reditus tibi*.

## 1. Prosopopeia and literary models

My analysis will start from one of the most important aspects of the encomiastic strategy of Statius, the imperial praise. In this first chapter, I will examine the use of mythical voices as a rhetorical instrument to deliver the praise for Domitian.

Thirteen years ago, Kathleen Coleman<sup>40</sup> wrote an article about mythological figures in Statius' *Silvae* and their role of spokespersons as an encomiastic device. She listed all the speeches pronounced in the poems as well as pointing out the main influence the Hellenistic encomium had on Statius' employment of this rhetorical strategy. The poetic device of introducing mythological or divine figures for the delivery of the encomiastic speeches serves two main purposes in the world of the *Silvae*: the first is to create an engaging new manner of addressing the *laudandus*; the second, to heighten the effectiveness of the encomium by employing privileged spokespersons. Notably, in the reality of imperial Rome, the encomiastic strategy emerges with particular relevance in the context of eulogies for the emperor, who represents the most desirable reader for the court poet. The employment of mythical or divine spokespersons for the delivery of the encomia offers an interesting opportunity to reevaluate Statius' strategy of negotiating the celebration of the empire with the promotion of his own poetry.

Building on the work initiated by Coleman, my analysis will focus on the models for the construction of the prosopopeia, and how they relate specifically to the encomium of Domitian. The sequence of the poems aims at offering a more detailed analysis of the Augustan models of Virgil and Ovid, and how Statius engages with them in the representation of the characters of Volturnus and the Sibyl (*Silv.* 4.3), Janus (*Silv.* 4.1) and Curtius (*Silv.* 1.1).

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### a. *Silv.* 4.3

*Silv.* 4.3 introduces a pivotal *topos* of the imperial propaganda, the control over nature and the civilising 'mission' associated with the imperial imagery.

The occasion is offered by a real event, the inauguration of the *via Domitiana*, a new road that was meant to connect Sinuessa to Puteoli, thus shortening the journey between Rome and Naples<sup>41</sup>. The extraordinary event is then felt at the same time as a technological achievement and a

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<sup>40</sup> Coleman 1999.

<sup>41</sup> For an accurate description of the topography, with pictures, see Coleman 1988, pp. 102-103.

confirmation of the imperial authority. What is in fact a thoroughly human success, in the enhanced world of the *Silvae* becomes a demonstration of super-human control over nature<sup>42</sup>.

The topic of the *silva* is introduced in the first part by the poet with a *Priamel*, a series of questions and answers which gradually brings the reader near to identify the subject and the context of the poem. These two elements acquire a more defined structure when Domitian is praised in particular for the public works he commissioned (vv. 9-26):

Sed **qui** limina bellicosa Iani  
iustis legibus et foro coronat,  
**qui** castae Cereri diu negata  
reddit iugera sobriasque terras,  
**qui** fortem vetat interire sexum  
et censor prohibet mares adultos  
pulchrae supplicium timere formae,  
**qui reddit Capitolio Tonantem  
et Pacem propria domo reponit,  
qui genti patriae futura semper  
sancit limina Flaviumque caelum,**  
**hic** segnes populi via gravatus  
et campos iter omne detinentes  
longos eximit ambitus novoque  
iniectu solidat gravis harenas,  
gaudens Euboicae domum Sibyllae  
Gauranosque sinus et aestuantes  
septem montibus admovere Baias<sup>43</sup>.

The series of anaphoras of the pronoun *qui* enhances the suggestion of a sacred context, in which the figure of the emperor is addressed like a divinity<sup>44</sup>. Through the style of religious hymns<sup>45</sup>, the main features of the god (in this case, the emperor<sup>46</sup>) are described in an effective way. Nevertheless, the solemn tone is not sufficient to hide the very concrete nature of the works

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<sup>42</sup> I generally agree with the position of Smolenaars 2006, p. 223, n. 1, on the interpretation of the relationship between man and nature in the poem: "making alteration to nature was certainly considered a morally ambiguous activity by some Romans, but not, I think, in this poem". The interpretation given by Newlands 2002, p. 292 and *passim* seems unnecessarily excessive, when she reads the intervention over nature only as a violent act, a declaration of power and strength by the emperor.

<sup>43</sup> The edition of the text of the *Silvae* I follow in this work is Courtney 1990, if not otherwise stated.

<sup>44</sup> The same use of the personal pronoun is displayed for example in Lucretius' prologue when addressing Venus (1, 3-6): *quae mare navigerum, quae terras frugiferentis/concelebras, per te quoniam genus omne animantum/concipitur visitque exortum lumina solis:/te, dea, te fugiunt venti, te nubila caeli/adventumque tuum, tibi suavis daedala tellus/summittit flores, tibi rident aequora ponti* (...). For the identification of the *Du-Stil* see Norden 1956, pp. 149 ff.

<sup>45</sup> See e. g. Verg., *Aen.* 3, 358-360, where Aeneas questions the fortune-teller Helenus about the outcome of his journey: *his vatem aggredior dictis ac talia quaeso:/Troiugena,interpres divum, qui numina Phoebi,/qui tripodas, Clarii lauros,qui sidera sentis*. See also Stat., *Theb.* 8, 77-78 *quaere deis qui bella ferat, qui fulminis ignis/infestumque Iovem clipeo fumante repellat*.

<sup>46</sup> See Coleman 1988, p. 106 *ad v.* 9.

promoted by Domitian: the construction of the new forum and the temple dedicated to Janus (vv. 9-10) and the promulgation of two edicts, the first on the limitation of viticulture in Italy (vv. 11-12) and the second against castration (vv. 13-15). What seems to be an ordinary administrative report is rescued in the encomium by the enhanced tone in which these political resolutions are presented. Again, Statius displays his skills in giving a cosmological relevance to human deeds. In this poetic frame, Domitian's resolutions are compared to a divine *lex* and presented as an act of restoration of a natural order of things, strengthened by the legal use of *nego*. The chosen expressions disclose a partly humorous hint, like the exaggeration implied by *interire sexum*.

The *limina* of the temple of Janus are defined as *bellicosa*, for the traditional association of the god with war. The imperial intervention in this regard appears not only to humble but almost to legitimize the use of military force, under the laws that regulate it (*iustis legibus et foro*), with an expression that closely resembles the role of Janus in *Silv.* 4.1, 14-15: *omnia iussisti componere bella novique/in leges iurare fori*. Therefore, the building of a new temple dedicated to a belligerent god becomes a symbol of the imperial propaganda, in which peace and war can coexist under the emperor (*qui...coronat*)<sup>47</sup>.

The mention of Ceres as a petitioner of Domitian in the following *exemplum* enhances the suggestion of an ideal world, in which it is the emperor to do favours to the gods and not vice versa<sup>48</sup>. What it is in fact a piece of legislation on the limitation of viticulture is transformed into the legitimate return of the land to Ceres. On the divine level, it can also be implied that the traditional association of Bacchus with viticulture raises some doubts as to a possible rivalry between the two divinities. The event nonetheless is described with sympathetic tones (*diu negata*) thus conveying a greater effect to the intervention of the emperor, both benevolent and powerful.

The last imperial edict, on the prohibition of male castration, draws attention at the same time to traditional morality and to human nature itself, thus referring to the main theme of the *silva*: the attitude towards nature and its laws. This initial prohibition of interference with nature is developed later in the poem, to the final conclusion of declaring human agency a fulfilment of nature, as already theorized by Cicero in the *De legibus*.

<sup>47</sup> See Coleman 1988, *ibidem* "Domitian's policy is that war is a tool of justice and peace".

<sup>48</sup> See Coleman 1988, p. 106 *ad v.* 11 "the paradox of a mortal doing a deity a favour is complimentary to Domitian". In *Silv.* 4.1, 22, in the same way it is Minerva to serve the emperor. Newlands 2002, p. 290 reads such role inversion as a possible manifestation of *hybris* by the emperor. It is my belief that this implication does not apply here. Domitian's actions are done on behalf of humans and gods, and his authority is everywhere felt; however, when it comes to the real encomium, he is always portrayed in a humble and respectful attitude as the traditional *topos* requires (see *Silv.* 1.6, 42-50; 4.1, 10; 4.2, 42-43). In addition, *modestia* is a fundamental requirement for a sovereign also according to Pliny (*Pan.* 2-4).

Regarding the practice of castration and the presence of eunuchs<sup>49</sup>, there are no doubts on Domitian's intentions: in his role of *censor*<sup>50</sup>, the prohibition (*vetat; prohibet*) stands as a defence of natural law<sup>51</sup>, and the poet portrays the emperor as a guarantee of the equilibrium between civic and human spheres.

From what it has been said so far, Domitian's authority in the application of the law is at the same time human and divine. The duality of the imperial power puts the emperor on a higher level than the heavenly gods and allows him to 'grant favours' to the *dei superi* by building new temples on their behalf. The inversion of roles is accomplished: it is Domitian who dedicates a temple to Jupiter, returning to a proper state of affairs (*propria domo reponit*) and it is not by chance that the same verb is employed to express the benevolent and authoritative action (*reddit*). In this way, Statius displays once again a situation in which the traditional dedication of a temple to a god is reversed in an act of benevolence performed by the emperor<sup>52</sup>.

In the same way we are to intend the renovation of the temple of Peace (also mentioned in *Silv.* 4.1), that in the poet's words becomes another symbol of the imperial power. The expression *Pacem propria domo reponit* acquires a double meaning, literary and metaphorical: with the building of a new temple of Peace, Domitian ends up being the instrument and guarantee of peace.

The public work that represents the climax of Domitian's commitment is certainly the temple dedicated to his divinised family. In his role of *Iuppiter in terra*, he dedicates (*sancit*) a celestial house meant to be an eternal home for his relatives (*futura...limina*), so that the vault of heaven hyperbolically becomes a possession of the imperial dynasty<sup>53</sup>. Therefore, the legitimization of Domitian's divinity stands as a guarantee for his actions on earth.

These premises finally lead our analysis to the main subject of the poem, the construction of the *via Domitiana*. The road being also a public work promoted by the emperor, it feels the effect of the double nature of his *artifex*. In other words, the road is depicted at the same time as a technological and divine miracle, as an expression of a god's resolution (*hic...eximit longos ambitus...gaudens*). In the poetic context that Statius creates, the reader gradually becomes familiar

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<sup>49</sup> The favourite of Domitian, Einarus, is also a *puer delicatus* to whom Statius dedicates an entire poem (*Silv.* 3.4). I will analyse it later in my work.

<sup>50</sup> On Domitian's rigorous censorship see Buttrey 1975 with further bibliography.

<sup>51</sup> Coleman 1988, p. 107 *ad vv.* 13-15 notes that castration was contested as unnatural: see *Sen. Contr.* 10.4, 17 *principes...viri contra naturam divitias suas exercent: castratorum greges habent*. The role of Domitian in this context is well summarised by Coleman 1988, *ibidem*: "St. equates Domitian's edict with divine prohibition".

<sup>52</sup> See also *Silv.* 3.1, 104-109, where Hercules asks Pollius Felix to build a temple for him.

<sup>53</sup> *Flavium caelum* can be a *double entendre*, as noted by Coleman 1988, pp. 109-110 *ad locum*: "it actually describes the ceiling of the temple, decorated like heaven; it implies in flattering hyperbole that heaven is guaranteed to be the eternal domain of the Flavian family." See also Newlands 2002, p. 289. *Caelum* is an emendation by Turnebus, later accepted by Markland and all the modern editors for the unsatisfactory reading in *M calvum*.



with a more authoritative representation of the imperial figure, and in particular with the control over nature.

After the detailed description of the works carried out on the new road (vv. 40-60), Statius moves on to register the impact on the natural elements with emotive and hyperbolic tones (vv. 61-66):

*fervent* litora mobilesque silvae,  
*it longus medias fragor per urbes*  
atque *echo* simul hinc et inde *fractam*  
Gauro Massicus uvifer *remittit*.  
*Miratur* sonitum quieta Cyme  
et Literna palus pigerque Safon.

The dramatic tension of the scenery, openly suggested by the epic models to which the *silva* refers<sup>54</sup>, does not divert the attention from the positive connotation of the project. The *fervor* of the *silvae* is the same Aeneas feels before leaving for Italy in the Virgilian model. Even the sounds help convey a greater impact to the image: the *fragor* and the *fracta echo* coming from the road under construction are etimologically connected and ideally remind of the noise that the observers (the poet and the readers) could hear *in loco*. Statius displays the reaction of nature, both passive (*remittit*) and amazed (*miratur*)<sup>55</sup>, similarly to the amazement of Curtius at the sight of the equestrian statue of Domitian in *Silv.* 1.1<sup>56</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> The intertexts playing here are in particular *Aen.* 4, 407 *opere omnis semita fervet* and 409-410 *cum litora fervere late/prospiceres*. The moment catches a sad Dido looking at the Trojans getting ready to leave Carthage. The line *it longus medias fragor per urbes* is borrowed from Virgil: *Aen.* 4, 173 *extemplo Libyae magnas it Fama per urbes*; 4, 443 *it stridor*; 4, 665 *it clamor*; 9, 664 *it clamor totis per propugnacula muris*. The Virgilian intertext has been a subject for different interpretations. Newlands 2002, p. 294, transfers directly the epic pathos to the *silva*, as a sign of the violent impact of the new road over nature: “all the same, the text does not mute the violence involved in the alteration of the land”. More sensible Smolenaars 2006, pp. 228-229: “the subtext (Dido’s agony and death) here may add a note of pathos and tragedy, but in my opinion the effect of this intertextual play is mildly humorous.” Personally I agree with this second position, because the epic quotations are not meant to convey the same effect, but rather a sense of a Brechtian ‘estrangement’: the gap between the *grandeur* of the epic language and the humble reality of a new road been built is another example of Statius’ humour.

<sup>55</sup> Newlands 2002, pp. 293-298 gives to these verses the usual negative or at least ambiguous interpretation: the upsetting of nature caused by the works would lead as a natural consequence to feelings of fear and astonishment. In my opinion the mildly dramatic tension of these verses is an effective preparation for the ‘catartic’ speech by Voltumnus.

<sup>56</sup> The similarities between the two public works are remarkable. The *incipit* of both poems celebrating them are structured in an interrogative form: *Silv.* 4.3, 1-3 *quis duri silicio gravisque ferri (immanis sonus aequori propinquum) saxosae latus Appiae replevit?*; *Silv.* 1.1, 1-7 *quae superimposito moles geminata colosso/stat Latium completa forum? Caelone peractum/fluxit opus? Siculis an conformata caminis/effigies lassum Steropen Brontenque reliquit?/an te Palladiae talem, Germanice, nobis/effinxere manus qualem modo frena tenentem/Rhenus et attoniti vidit domus ardua Daci?*. In both cases the initial fear vanishes when the presence of the emperor is associated with the *opus*. In *Silv.* 1.1, 66-83 Curtius plays both the roles of the fearful spectator and encomiast; in *Silv.* 4.3 it is instead the river Voltumnus to lighten the dramatic atmosphere in which the construction of the new road is set. I will analyse *Silv.* 1.1 more in detail later.

### (i) Reshaping Volturnus

Statius employs important spokespersons for the delivery of the encomium, thus showing how the narrative choices can fulfil the poetic message. The extraordinary novelty of the construction of the *via Domitiana* finds a full justification and relevance in the words of the river-god Volturnus. The passage shows its relevance even from the introduction of the river (vv. 67-71):

at flavum caput umidumque late  
crinem mollibus impeditus ulvis  
Volturnus levat ora maximoque<sup>57</sup>  
pontis Caesarei reclinis arcu  
raucis talia faucibus redundat:

The adversative *at* marks the introduction of a new character. The river god Volturnus is presented in a poetic frame where nature is dramatically unsettled by the building of the new road. However, the presence of the conjunction *at* does not exclude a positive connotation of the event, as I will discuss now.

From his very first appearance, Volturnus is described with unusual features for a river god. In the personification of the natural element, his head is *flavum*, an adjective that might derive from the sandy colour of his water; the expression though also conveys the idea of the liveliness of the river<sup>58</sup>, which distinguishes him from the traditional *severitas* attributed to river gods<sup>59</sup>.

The expression *flavum caput*, usually employed in descriptions of heroic or mythical figures<sup>60</sup>, acquires here a new meaning, specifically 'aquatic'. Even if with this difference, the expression recalls the memory of the Virgilian Tiber, in particular in his appearance to Aeneas in a dream in the eighth book of the *Aeneid* (8, 31-65):

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<sup>57</sup> Shackleton-Bailey 2003 erroneously translates *maximo...arcu* as 'the mighty arch'. However, Coleman 1988, p. 122 *ad loc.* suggests that "St. probably does not envisage one of the supporting arches (...) but the span of the entire bridge (which itself formed an arch, supported by subsidiary arches beneath)".

<sup>58</sup> The adjective is in fact often referred to sand; in Virgil we find it in the description of a sea creature, the nymph Arethusa, when she is transformed in a fountain: *Georg.* 4, 351-352 (...) *sed ante alias Arethusa sorores/prospiciens summa flavum caput extulit unda*; the context reminds of a similar gesture performed by the two characters who are about to speak. See Hor., *Carm.* 1.2, 13 *flavom Tiberim*; Verg., *Aen.* 7, 30-31 *Tiberinus...multa flavus harena*; Ov., *Met.* 14, 448 *in mare cum flava prorumpit Thybris harena*. See also EV, pp. 538-539 *s. v. flavus* and OLD, p. 711, *s. v. flavus*.

<sup>59</sup> See *e. g.* Verg., *Aen.* 8, 31-32, again referred to the Tiber: *deus ipse...Tiberinus...senior*. The representation of the Tiber in the *Fasti* (5, 635 ff.) has always been seen as a humorous portrait of an old river, especially for the infamous line 646 *Albula, si meministi, tunc mihi nomen erat*. For a recap of the bibliography and a quite striking interpretation see Merli 2001. The Tiber and the Nile are usually represented in a similar way as Volturnus here, as stated by Newlands 2002, p. 302: "a colossal reclining figure with abundant hair and holding a cornucopia or rudder".

<sup>60</sup> A similar lexical apparatus is the one employed *e. g.* in the tragic ending of the fourth book of the *Aeneid*, vv. 693-704, where Dido's death is described. The offering of a lock of her hair (*flavum...crinem*) becomes the symbol of the heroic choice of the queen to commit suicide.

*huic deus ipse loci fluvio Tiberinus amoenus  
 populeas inter senior se attollere frondes  
 visus (eum tenuis glauco velabat amictu  
 carbasus, et crinis umbrosa tegebat harundo),  
 tum sic affari et curas his demere dictis:  
 "o sate gente deum, Troianam ex hostibus urbem  
 qui revehis nobis aeternaque Pergama servas,  
 exspectate solo Laurenti arvisque Latinis,  
 hic tibi certa domus, certi (ne absiste) penates;  
 neu belli terrere minis; tumor omnis et irae  
 concessere deum (...)  
 Iamque tibi, ne vana putes haec fingere somnum,  
 litoreis ingens inventa sub ilicibus sus  
 triginta capitum fetus enixa iacebit,  
 alba, solo recubans, albi circum ubera nati.  
 (...)  
 haud incerta cano. nunc qua ratione quod instat  
 expedias victor, paucis (adverte) docebo.  
 (...)  
 ipse ego te ripis et recto flumine ducam,  
 adversum remis superes subvectus ut amnem.  
 Surge age, nate dea, primisque cadentibus astris  
 Iunoni fer rite preces, iramque minasque  
 supplicibus supera votis. mihi victor honorem  
 persolves. ego sum pleno quem flumine cernis  
 stringentem ripas et pingua culta secantem,  
 caeruleus Thybris, caelo gratissimus amnis.  
 Hic mihi magna domus, celsis caput urbibus exit."*

From the very start, the parallel with the Tiber is focused on the ecphrastic features of the river. The god Tiberinus appears in a dream vision to Aeneas softly wrapped with fronds and reeds<sup>61</sup>, in a gracious status of harmony with the nature surrounding him. The god then announces to Aeneas the prophecy of the future foundation of Rome.

In Tiber's words there is no sign of the constriction or shame felt by Voltumnus, and we can then say that the Virgilian image represents the tradition Statius aims to reverse in the encomiastic genre. The Tiber takes the role of spiritual and concrete guide for the Trojan heroes, as suggested by the active verbal forms (*haud incerta cano; ipse ego te...ducam; stringentem; secantem*). By contrast, Voltumnus lacks autonomy and is subjected to the power of Domitian (*calcor; sub te duce, te iubente*).

As we have said about the employment of prosopopeia, in the *Silvae* it is often the mythical figures who deliver the *actio gratiarum* to the emperor and not the other way round. Taking its

<sup>61</sup> In very similar terms the Tiber is also described by Ovid in *Fast.* 6, 636-637: *Thybris harundi ferum medio caput extulit alveo/raucaque dimovit talibus ora sonis*. Statius' Voltumnus then seems to combine elements of the two ecphraseis of the Tiber.

leave from Aeneas, the Tiber in the *Aeneid* declares itself to be *caelo gratissimus amnis*: its authority and role of foreteller are legitimized by the divine protection. Again, the scenario in the *silva* appears to be quite the opposite, since Volturnus becomes aware of his river features only after the intervention of the imperial *numen* (*amnis esse coepi*), as opposed to its previous status of uncontrollable flood. In the reverse reality of the poem it is the mythical character who thanks the emperor (*gratis ago*) in the same way that Janus did in *Silv.* 4.1, 12-13 (*grates/Ianus agit*).

Despite the impetuosity of its flow, the river is *impeditus* and not able to move due to the reeds that cover it (*mollibus...ulvis*), with an effective double meaning of the participle ('obstructed' but also 'covered')<sup>62</sup>. In this particular position onto the bridge, which is another public manifestation of the imperial *persona* (*pontis Caesarei*), the river manages to be heard and deliver the encomiastic speech. Therefore, the verb *redundat* does not only refer to the movement of Volturnus' water, but also to the emphasis it puts in speaking its words, conveying to the image a greater rhetorical impact<sup>63</sup>. Moreover, the vehemence that the river shows in its attempt to speak contrasts with its limitation of movement. The presentation of the river as given by Statius leaves space for different interpretations. For example, according to her general reading of the *Silvae*, Newlands<sup>64</sup> supports the idea of a subjected and enslaved Volturnus: "Volturnus...speaks from a position of subservience (p. 301); "Domitian ...reduced the god to slavery" (p. 303), conferring a negative connotation to the representation of the river god. However, her application of Fowler's 'deviant focalisation' is here too restrictive. It would be inconsistent to entrust the *actio gratiarum* to the river so negatively characterised, and I am more inclined to think that as the verb *redundat* may suggest and the following lines also seem to confirm, Volturnus' attitude towards Domitian is defined in terms of gratitude for the new status, which strikingly brings it closer to a natural condition. Once again, the oddity of his physical position just adds a humorous touch to the whole scene, as it is for the similar presentation of Janus in *Silv.* 4.1<sup>65</sup>. Finally, *redundat* is consistent with the traits of exaggeration typical of the encomiastic speeches in the *Silvae*.

In this scenario, Volturnus is directly involved in the technological improvements of the area, thus being the ideal spokesperson for the imperial encomium. In addition to that, in this way Statius also accomplishes the difficult task of legitimising the manipulation of nature; it is a natural element in fact to approve of the human interference on the territory (vv. 72-94):

<sup>62</sup> See OLD, p. 841, 1b, s. v. *impeditus*: "encumbered with baggage". However, the verb is used in a virtual sense (to decorate) in Hor., *Carm.* 1.4, 9: *nunc decet aut viridi nitidum caput impedire myrto*.

<sup>63</sup> See Smolenaars 2006, p. 229: "*redundat* is rather common of flooding rivers, but only here of a river-god 'pouring out' words. Statius seems to play with the verb's rhetorical sense 'to be exuberant, excessive'". See also Newlands 2002, p. 307.

<sup>64</sup> Newlands 2002, pp. 301-303.

<sup>65</sup> See also OLD, p. 1593, 1c, s. v. *redundo*: "to pour out, cause to flood out (in quot. poet., of a personified river). See also Ov., *Fast.* 6, 402 *amne redundatis fossa madebat aquis* and Tr. 3, 10, 52 *sive redundatas flumine cogita quas*.

‘camporum bone conditor meorum,  
 qui me, vallibus aviis refusum  
 et ripas habitare nescientem  
 recti legibus alvei ligasti,  
 et nunc ille ego turbidus minaxque,  
 vix passus dubias prius carinas,  
 iam pontem fero perviusque calcor;  
 qui terras rapere et rotare silvas  
 adsueram (pudet!), amnis esse coepi.  
 sed grates ago servitusque tanti est  
 quod sub te duce, te iubente, cessi,  
 quod tu maximus arbiter meaeque  
 victor perpetuus legere ripae.  
 Et nunc limite me colis beato  
 nec sordere sinis malumque late  
 deterges sterilis soli pudorem,  
 ne me pulvereum gravemque caeno<sup>66</sup>  
 Tyrrheni sinus adlavat profundum  
 (qualis Cinyphios tacente ripa  
 Poenus Bagrada serpit inter agros)  
 sed talis ferar ut nitente cursu  
 tranquillum mare proximumque possim  
 puro gurgite provocare Lirim.’

From the very start, Voltumnus’ speech resembles closely a religious hymn pronounced before an authoritative god. The suggestion is strengthened by the epithet *conditor*<sup>67</sup>, which helps convey to Domitian the charisma of a god who brings order over the chaos of untamed nature.

The description of the river as excessive and incontinent conveys to the imperial intervention the idea of restoring the natural shape to Voltumnus. The river underlines the drastic measures that had to be taken (*ligasti*<sup>68</sup>), and acknowledges them as absolutely necessary and legitimate. The adjective *recti*, agreed with *alvei* to suggest the constraint of the new course given to the river, as a hendiadys also refers to *legibus*. Once again, the use of the *figura etymologica*

<sup>66</sup> Smolenaars 2006, p. 231, n. 13 prefers the reading in M *gravemque caelo*, for the contrast it would create with the model of the river Tiber in *Aen.* 8, 64 *caelo gratissimus amnis*. However, the emendation also happens to have a functioning parallel with a passage from the *Aeneid* in which the infernal river Acheron is described in similar terms (*Aen.* 6, 296): *turbidus hic caeno...gurgis aestuat*. The combination of adjective and ablative in both cases defines the muddy waters of the river.

<sup>67</sup> Coleman 1988, p. 123 *ad loc.*: “*conditor* is an appropriate appellation for Domitian, implying that he has exerted a civilizing influence over hitherto untamed nature and is thus worthy of the dignified title associated with divinities and heroes.” See e. g. Verg., *Aen.* 8, 313 *tum rex Evandrus Romanae conditor arcis*; Hor., *Ars.* 394 *dictus et Amphion, Thebanae conditor urbis*. See also OLD, p. 394, s. v. *conditor*.

<sup>68</sup> Newlands 2002, p. 303 points out that the verb *ligare* “is a word associated with the notions of constriction and imprisonment” (OLD, p. 1030, 4, s. v. *ligo*); “the river god speaks from the point of view of a slave captured in war”; “he offers the emperor a meekly subservient voice of imperial praise”. There is no doubt that this is the effect that it is conveyed here; nonetheless, I think that Statius’ ultimate aim here is to portray (with the usual hint of humour) even such a dramatic action as an inevitable strategy of defence from the violence of the river, rather than a deliberate violation of nature. The same verb was indeed used in the description of the position of Janus in *Silv.* 4.1, 13.

(*legibus/ligasti*) suggests the support of a *lex* which is both human, divine and natural law: Domitian's resolutions cannot but be seen as a moral and necessary action. This legitimation is also confirmed by the adjectives that Volturnus employs to define itself, *turbidus* and *minax*: they not only referred to its waters<sup>69</sup>, but also to its menacing character. The river god looks back at his past with feelings of regret and shame. If we accept Mozley's punctuation at v. 80<sup>70</sup>, the river's reaction to its new form is interpreted as a new birth (*amnis esse coepi*), which is similarly employed by Statius elsewhere in the collection to describe the beginning of a new era after an imperial intervention. For example, in *Silv.* 1.4, the poet prays for the recovery of Rutilius Gallicus as a new life that shall be granted to him (v. 125 *hic vitae natalis erit*). In the same way, in *Silv.* 4.2 the personal invitation to an imperial banquet represents for Statius the threshold to a new period of his life (v. 13 *haec aevi mihi prima dies, hic limina vitae*). I think that the strategy operating in Volturnus' speech does not differ from the other occurrences of the same idea, which is ultimately complimentary to Domitian.

The *iunctura ille ego*, often employed to oppose a happy past to an unfavourable present<sup>71</sup>, in Volturnus' words is reversed into a sign of gratefulness for the new shape. Nonetheless, the outcome is unexpected and paradoxical: the untamed nature of the river eventually goes under a real process of moral and 'civic' refinement (*pontem refero perviusque calcor*). The crossing of the river, now possible with the construction of the new bridge, becomes a symbol of the human triumph over an adverse nature.

In the imperialistic ideology, the relationship with the 'winner' is resolved in a form of 'gratitude'. The manipulation of nature is identified both with a fulfilment of it, and with the triumph of technology and the civilising mission promoted by the emperor.

The novelty of the *silva* consists, in fact, in the attitude of the river god towards the physical limitation to which it is restrained: Volturnus delivers the *actio gratiarum* for the emperor from an uncomfortable position, with a mildly humorous effect (*grates ago servitusque tanti est*). Its gratitude gives emphasis to the miraculous influence of the imperial *numen*. The presence of

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<sup>69</sup> See e. g. Verg., *Aen.* 6, 296 *turbidus hic caeno...gurgis aestuat*; Quint., *Decl.* 388, 13 *exaestuantis fructus mina facies*.

<sup>70</sup> Mozley 1928 puts the comma after *assueram* instead of *pudet* (Shackleton-Bailey 2003). In this way the interjection *pudet* is referred to the earlier status of the river (*amnis esse coepi*). By contrast Coleman 1988 and Smolenaars 2006, p. 230 prefer the other option. Newlands 2002, p. 306 interprets the ambiguous punctuation of *pudet* as a declaration of sorrow by Volturnus for its new shape (*pudet amnis esse coepi*), which she later misinterprets as 'becoming a subjugated stream'.

<sup>71</sup> Amongst many possible examples, I report two from different contexts: Ovid., *Pont.* 1.2, 131 *ille ego sum, qui te colui, quem festa solebat/inter convivas mensas videre tuos*; Stat., *Theb.* 9, 434-437, where it is the river god Ismenus to speak: *ille ego clamatus sacris ululatibus amnis,/qui molles thyrsos Baccheaque cornua puro/fonte lavare feror, stipatus caedibus artas/in freta quaero vias*.

Domitian is felt as such a powerful force that every action he performed cannot but have a felicitous outcome, and respects natural laws.

The repetition of the second person pronoun, a feature typical of religious hymns, is connected here with words borrowed from the military lexicon (*te duce; te iubente; maximus arbiter; victor perpetuus*). Domitian's *auctoritas* then is identified both with actual strength and absolute power and a miraculous influence over nature.

This double representation of the imperial *numen* is with no doubt a part of the wider encomiastic strategy employed in court literature, since Martial also gives several examples of the same *topos*<sup>72</sup>. One is particularly worth mentioning (*Epigr.* 1.104, 21-22):

Haec clementia non paratur arte,  
sed norunt cui *serviant* leones.

The hierarchy of power is here also precisely defined: the wild animals submit themselves to the humans not with normal training, but because of the extraordinary influence of the emperor. Martial in the *Epigrams* then creates the rules and a new lexicon for the different roles played in the game of power relationships (*Sp.* 30):

Concita veloces fugeret cum damna Molossos  
et varia lentas necteret arte moras,  
Caesaris ante pedes *supplex similisque roganti*  
constitit, et praedam non tetigere canes.  
.....  
haec intellecto principe dona tulit.  
***Numen habet Caesar: sacra est haec, sacra potestas,  
credite: mentiri non didicere ferae.***

The influence of the imperial *numen* provokes an immediate reaction of the wild beasts, prostrated in a condition of respect and humbleness (*supplex similisque roganti*). The fierceness leaves space to religious fear, in a scenario in which the wild animals are completely humanized. It is worth pointing out that animals, as representatives of 'nature', do not lie (*mentiri non didicere ferae*). The harmony so created amongst divine, human and natural world recalls once again the traditional propagandistic *topos* of the golden age: the numinous presence of the emperor is the guarantee for a universe in which violence and contrasts do not exist<sup>73</sup>.

Statius and Martial legitimize the human intervention for setting the natural equilibrium following two main directions. On the one hand, the emperor holds a power that is both 'holy' and

<sup>72</sup> Mart., *Sp.* 17, 25; *Epigr.* 1.14; 4.30; 9.31.

<sup>73</sup> See Moretti 1992, p. 55; pp. 64-65 on the theme of the 'spontaneous' adoration of animals.

authoritative; on the other hand, this power is fully justified by the gratitude and religious respect paid by Nature to the emperor, coming to a full circle. The moral *auctoritas* of the emperor becomes guarantee for improvement and progress.

The last part of the eulogy is a real poetic manifesto put by Statius in Voltumnus' mouth. An anticipation is suggested at v. 84, where the expression *meae...legere...ripae* suggests the poet's aim to place his own poetic work on a level with the engineering works, and can possibly allude to an actual inscription on the bridge<sup>74</sup>.

The transformation undertaken by the river is described in the following lines (85-94) as a real catharsis. The passage to the new status is felt as a 'purification' (*nunc limite me colis beato; deterges*) from the earlier stage, which the river is ashamed of (*malum...sterilis soli pudorem*). The metamorphosis that leads Voltumnus to restrain and purify his flow acquires, as we said, a metatextual meaning that involves the whole poem<sup>75</sup>.

Statius seems to draw on the famous Callimachean statement on poetry (*Hymn.* 2, 108-112) and follows the transformation of Voltumnus from muddy river to pure flow (*profundi; nitente cursu; tranquillum; puro gurgite*). The river god though shows its modernity when it acknowledges the emperor as the 'holy fount' (ἕξ ἱερῆς...λιβάς) that gave it its final shape. Domitian is once more confirmed to be one of the founding elements of Statius' new poetics.

There is no doubt that the *Silvae* ideally take up the ideas developed in Hellenistic and neoteric poetry<sup>76</sup>, but it is also clear that Statius' aim is to take the tradition on its way to the reality of Rome. As noted by Smolenaars<sup>77</sup>, in a famous epigram (*Ep.* 28 Pf. – *AP* 12, 43) Callimachus declares κελεύθω/χαίρω τίς πολλοὺς ὧδε καὶ ὧδε φέρει, a statement that is promptly denied by Voltumnus when it confirms its pride of bearing the weight of the bridge and as a result of the construction of a road (*iam pontem fero perviusque calcor*). Moreover, the contrast with the Hellenistic model seems to go further on a metapoetic level again, as it implies that the fast-written, light occasional poetry of the *Silvae* can directly compete with the refined verses of Callimachus. In other words, it is intriguing to think that Statius hints here at the poetic task of the *Silvae*, *i. e.* to bring together speed of composition and *labor limae*.

However, the Callimachean metapoetic suggestions do not affect the more 'mundane' aspect of technological progress, celebrated paradoxically as a return to nature. Moreover, the comparison with the Virgilian Tiber leads to a humorous characterisation of the river Voltumnus, which however still delivers a 'straight' encomium for Domitian. In my opinion, a certain Callimachean inspiration

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<sup>74</sup> As suggested by Coleman 1988, p. 125 *ad loc.* For a comprehensive study on the inscription see Flower 2001.

<sup>75</sup> Morgan 2010, pp. 56-59, analyses the possible identification between metre and content in the Voltumnus episode.

<sup>76</sup> Morgan 2010, pp. 73-76 remarks the Catullan influence on the use of the hendecasyllable in this poem.

<sup>77</sup> Smolenaars 2006, p. 233 and also Gibson 2006a, pp. xxii-xxvii.



can be also noted in this peculiar presentation of a spokesperson, where the *auctoritas* of the Virgilian Tiber leaves space to more complex dynamics of dealing with the imperial power.

## (ii) The Sibyl: a non-sibylline figure

While Voltumnus delivers the imperial eulogy, the road construction is completed. As usual Statius records the joyful reaction to the technological achievement and the benefits it brings to humans and animals (vv. 103-104, *tunc velocior acriorque cursus/tunc ipsos iuvat impetus iugales*).

The figure of the Sibyl is introduced with no interruption, with a series of questions that are eventually resolved by the declaration of her identity (vv. 114-118). The presentation of a new spokesperson corresponds to a *recusatio* by the poet (vv. 119-120):

cedamus; chely, iam repone cantus:  
*vates sanctior* incipit, tacendum est.

The poet asserts his authority as *vates*<sup>78</sup>, and introduces the Sibyl as the ideal spokesperson for delivering the praise, thus heightening the tones of the eulogy.

It is reasonable to think that the figure of the Sibyl would immediately remind the readers of the poem of the appearances of the prophetess in book 6 of the *Aeneid* and in book 4 of the *Eclogues*<sup>79</sup>. The Virgilian *exempla* play a crucial role in the portrait of Domitian drawn by the Sibyl in her prophecy, where the emperor's traits are influenced by the figure of Augustus in the *Aeneid* and of the *puer* in the *Eclogues*. In both the eulogies the arrival of a new golden age is announced:

*hic vir, hic est*, tibi quem promitti saepius audis,  
*Augustus Caesar, divi genus, aurea condet*  
*saecula qui* rursus Latio regnata per arva  
Saturno quondam, super et Garamantas et Indos  
proferet imperium (*Aen.* 6, 791-794)

Tu modo *nascenti puero*, quo ferrea primum  
Desinet ac *toto surget gens aurea mundo*  
Casta fave Lucina: tuus iam regnat Apollo. (*Ecl.* 4, 8-10)

<sup>78</sup> To the comparison of Statius with other figures of poets (especially Orpheus) in the *Silvae* is dedicated the work of Lovatt 2007, pp. 145-163.

<sup>79</sup> The intertextuality has already been analysed in several occasions: Coleman 1988, pp. 130-135; Van Dam 1992; Newlands 2002, p. 309-323. I would mention as the most recent and updated the study done by Smolenaars 2006, pp. 234-244.

In these passages, the prophecy of the *aurea aetas* follows two different directions. In the *Aeneid*, the outcome of the new age relies entirely on military achievements, even if it is still conveyed with hymnic tones (*hic...hic...qui*); in the *Eclogues* on the other hand, the passage to a new era is marked by the rebirth of nature, appropriately symbolized by the goddess of birth *Lucina*. In our *silva*, the influence of both these models is felt in the portrait of Domitian. Nonetheless, in the emperor's golden age the equilibrium in nature is not spontaneous, but controlled by the imperial *numen*.

The image drawn by Virgil represents the cycle of the seasons that marks the life of the *puer* and points out the benevolence of nature that gives its fruits to men without constriction (*Ecl.* 4, 18 ff.):

at tibi prima, puer, **nullo munuscula cultu**  
errantis hederas passim cum baccare **tellus**  
...  
**incultisque** rubens pendebit sentibus uva,  
et durae quercus sudabunt roscida mella.  
(...)  
(...) **omnis feret omnia tellus.**  
**Non rastros patietur humus, non vinea falcem;**  
robustus quoque iam tauris iuga solvet arator;  
**nec varios discet mentiri lana colores,**  
ipse sed in pratis aries suave rubenti  
murice, iam croceo mutabit vellera luto;  
**sponte sua** sandyx pascentis vestiet agnos.

The scenario depicted in these lines presents nature as a pure environment in which men can live in harmony and simplicity. The equilibrium created between civil and natural world is then resolved in a tacit agreement of inviolability<sup>80</sup>.

Like in the eulogy of Voltumnus, the reality of the *silva* is dominated by a different set of values, so if Virgil states that *non rastros patietur humus, non vinea falcem*, Statius instead presents nature as something that has to be modified in order to (paradoxically) be brought back to a more natural status. Behind the official propaganda, it is clear that new values are being promoted and supported also by court poets. The very location of the Sibyl seems to confirm it, as Statius imagines her at the end of the new road (v. 114 *fine viae recentis imo*), just out of her cave, where she traditionally pronounces her riddles<sup>81</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> A similar representation of the golden age is given by Ovid in *Met.* 1, 89-112.

<sup>81</sup> See Verg., *Aen.* 6, 42-44 *excisum Euboicae latus ingens rupis in antrum, quo lati ducunt aditus centum, ostia centum, unde ruunt totidem voces, responsa Sibyllae*.

From her first words, Apollo's priestess shows full control over the surrounding nature and ideally transfers it to Domitian as a distinguishing feature of his divine power (vv. 124-127):

'Dicebam: "veniet (manete campi  
atque amnis), veniet favente caelo,  
qui foedum nemus et putres harenas  
celsis pontibus et via levabit."

The natural elements like the woods or the sand are described as obstacles that make the construction of the road difficult, and for this reason pejorative adjectives are employed in their description (*foedum* and *putres*). In this scenario, the favourable intervention of the emperor appears legitimized by a higher power, whose authority is not questionable (*favente caelo*). Such an absolute power over natural forces becomes one of the most relevant values on which the imperial *persona* relies. Domitian's credibility finds further confirmation in the authoritative words of the Sibyl: it is not by chance that she grounds her reliability on the ancient relationship with Aeneas and on Domitian's favour (vv. 129-133):

En hic est deus, hunc iubet beatis  
pro se Iuppiter imperare terris;  
quo non dignior has subit habenas  
ex quo me duce praescios Averni  
Aeneas avida futura quaerens  
lucos et penetravit et reliquit.

The 'investiture' conferred by Jupiter gives to Domitian a power that is equal to his divine one in heaven. Apollo's prophetess not only heightens the emperor to the highest level in the divine scale, but also places him as the only able to equal Aeneas as the leader of Rome.

To more classic encomiastic *topoi* Statius associates unusual values that are in opposition with traditional morality. What may appear as a contradiction is in fact yet another demonstration of the all-embracing figure of the emperor, who represents both the past and present of Rome.

In this context, the presence of Virgil behind the text suggests an *auctoritas* that, together with the Sibyl as spokesperson, contributes to heighten the encomium. The 'traditional' mention of Aeneas is followed by a new definition of the imperial power (vv. 135-138)<sup>82</sup>:

natura melior potentiorque  
hic si *flammigeros* teneret *axes*  
largis, India, nubibus maderes,

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<sup>82</sup> I follow here the rearrangement of the text suggested by Coleman 1988. See *ibidem*, p. 132 *ad* vv. 134-136.

undaret Libye, teperet Haemus.

Stattius imagines three *adynata* in which the control over nature could lead to positive effects. As Coleman's commentary points out<sup>83</sup>, the expression *si flammigeros teneret axes* suggests a reference to the myth of Phaethon. As usual, the mythical *exemplum* in the *Silvae* does not represent an inaccessible model, but rather an opportunity to declare the superiority of the *laudandus*. Smolenaars rightly states that 'we should have no doubts at all that Domitian would do better than Phaethon, and would even correct (Haemus) and reverse (Libye) the effects of his failure'<sup>84</sup>, but the lines seems to suggest more than that. The intertextual reference does not involve only a return to order after the dramatic effects caused by Phaethon, but also a paradoxical improvement of the weather. It can be argued that the reference to the Phaethon episode is genuinely positive, as it is also in the similar *locus* in Lucan's description of Nero's apotheosis (1. 53-59):

sed neque in Arctoo sedem tibi legeris orbe  
nec polus aversi calidus qua vergitur Austri,  
unde tuam videas obliquo sidere Romam.  
aetheris immensi partem si presseris unam,  
sentiet axis onus. librati pondera caeli  
orbe tene medio; pars aetheris illa sereni  
tota vacet nullaeque obstent a Caesare nubes.

As Michael Dewar argues in his analysis of this opening passage<sup>85</sup>, there is no reason to doubt that this represents in fact a piece of serious encomium, "before the quarrel with Nero and the imposition of the ban on Lucan's work"<sup>86</sup>.

It is my belief that there is more implied in the use of the figure of Phaethon, *i. e.* a possible association with the Sun. In Ovid for example the power of the god is described in similar terms (*Met.* 2, 59-62):

Non tamen **ignifero** quisquam consistere in *axe*  
me valet excepto. Vasti quoque **rector Olympi**,  
qui fera terribili iaculatur fulmina dextra,  
**non aget hos currus: et quid Iove maius habemus?**

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<sup>83</sup> Coleman 1988, *ibidem*.

<sup>84</sup> Smolenaars 2006, p. 239. Newlands 2002, pp. 314-215 defines as 'unsettling' the reference to the Phaethon's episode, and recognizes in it Statius' usual caution and ambiguity in defining power.

<sup>85</sup> Dewar 1994, pp. 199-211.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 210.

The Sun addresses the young Phaethon claiming his own and only right to ride the chariot, thus trying to discourage him from his bold request. As a final argumentation, the god claims that even Jupiter himself could not substitute him in his role, thus confirming the absolute power he holds.

In Statius, the encomiastic purpose of the poem implies an ideal overcome of the Ovidian model. Domitian is imagined as an enhanced divine charioteer, who in an ideal situation would not only maintain the equilibrium of the weather, but would probably improve it for securing to the world the best living conditions (*largis India nubibus maderes, undaret Libye, teperet Haemus*). The same idea seems to lay also behind Lucan's text, as Dewar brilliantly explains: "if there is in fact a deliberate allusion in Lucan's text to the Phaethon story as told by Ovid, it could be said to work better as a compliment: under *this* change of driver the same Tellus who was terrified in *Metamorphoses* 2 rests easy, with nothing to fear because Phoebus' replacement is not an ineffectual boy but his own equal, the earthly Sun, Nero"<sup>87</sup>. A power that in Ovid is not even worthy of Jupiter, in Statius is given by the father of the gods to the emperor (vv. 129-130 *hunc iubet beatis/pro se Iuppiter imperare terris*). In the frame of the poem, Domitian surpasses the negative model of Phaethon and ends up being superior also to the Sun and Jupiter themselves.

The real eulogy delivered by the Sibyl follows this long portrait of the sovereign and applies traditional *topoi* of the imperial panegyric, amongst which a prominent position is reserved for the long-life wish (vv. 139-152):

Salve, dux hominum et parens deorum,  
provisum mihi cognitumque numen,  
nec iam putribus evoluta chartis  
sollemni prece Quindecimviorum  
perlustra mea dicta, sed canentem  
ipsa comminus, ut mereris, audi.  
Vidi quam seriem virentis<sup>88</sup> aevi  
pronectant tibi candidae sorores:  
magnus te manet ordo saeculorum,  
natis longior abnepotibusque  
annos perpetua geres iuventa  
quos fertur placidos adisse Nestor,  
quos Tithonia computat senectus  
et quantos ego Delium poposci.

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<sup>87</sup> Dewar 1994, p. 211.

<sup>88</sup> The ms. M has *merentis*, as a clear perseveration error after *mereris* in the previous line. See Coleman 1988, p. 133 *ad loc.*, where she prefers Polster's textual emendation *imminentis* rather than *virentis* (proposed by Heinsius): "*imminentis* (Polster) creates a striking phrase (lit. 'sequence of impending age'), suggesting that Domitian is hovering on the brink of immortality; it also conveys a mild paradox: *imminet* frequently allude to the proximity of ill fortune or death (...) which is what the Fates usually contrive for man, but here, instead of impending death, they are responsible for protracted life." I think however that also the reading *virentis* is plausible in this context, as it anticipates the wish to Domitian to surpass the age of sons and grandsons (v. 148).

The choice of the Sibyl as the voice of the encomium gives to her words a direct value<sup>89</sup>. With the direct prophecies announced by her, Statius distances himself from the Virgilian model. Morgan has convincingly argued that the Statian prophetess “caps Virgil’s partisan Sibyl”<sup>90</sup> when she replaces her traditional obscure riddles (*Aen.* 6, 99: *horrendas canit ambages.../obscuris vera involvens*) with a direct speech. In the *silva* she goes even further and discards her own traditional prophecies, collected by the order of the *quindecimviri*, for a direct eulogy of Domitian (vv. 141-144). The ‘freedom’ from her traditional model, that Morgan interpreted as reflected in the use of the hendecasyllable<sup>91</sup>, plays an important role also for the encomiastic outcome of her speech. Statius adapts to the present age a mythical character bearing strong associations with the Roman cultural tradition (both historical and literary). Whereas in the *Aeneid* the hero has to beg the Sibyl to speak plain words to him (6, 76 *ipsa canas oro*), in the *silva* it is the prophetess who abandons her old custom in order to please the emperor (*canentem/ipsa comminus, ut mereris, audi*): Statius and Domitian surpass the great models of Virgil and Aeneas.

The Sibyl, to whom Apollo has granted as many years as the grains of sand she held in hand<sup>92</sup>, addresses Domitian with the title *dux hominum et parens deorum*, thus portraying him as a powerful earthly leader in his role of *praesens deus* and father of a deified family<sup>93</sup>. The choice of the Sibyl as spokesperson recalls the same literary device employed in choosing Janus: like the god, she also enjoys an extraordinary longevity as a gift from Apollo, even if not in the form of an eternal youth.

Her role appears consistent with the message she is about to deliver: from the very start of her speech, the Sibyl announces prophetically a long life to Domitian. The striking expression *series virentis aevi* calls attention to the use of the participle *virentis*, which in this context seems to have a proleptic meaning of what will follow in the eulogy. The verb does not only suggest a simple wish for longevity (implied also by *seriem*, a collective noun to indicate the years), but a wish for a long life lived as an eternal and vigorous youth. The literary consistency of the participle finds an important equivalent in *Silv.* 2.3, 77, in which Statius expresses the wish to his friend Atedius Melior for his tree ‘to be green again’: *hoc (scil. the tree) quae te sub teste...revirescet*. In this verse,

<sup>89</sup> A direct transferability of the oblique language of the Sibyl from the *Aeneid* to the *silva* is supported by Newlands 2002, p. 312. I do not see a valid reason for doubting the straightness of her role as an encomiast here. Statius engages with the Virgilian model in order to produce his own literary character. For a similar position see Morgan 2000, pp. 117-118.

<sup>90</sup> Morgan 2000, p. 117; more specifically focused on the identification between message and metre is Morgan 2010, pp. 66-73.

<sup>91</sup> Morgan 2000, p. 118.

<sup>92</sup> See Ovid, *Met.* 14, 129 ff.

<sup>93</sup> Compare the expression used by Curtius in *Silv.* 1.1, 74 *magnorum...genitor...deorum* and Janus in *Silv.* 4.1, 17 *salve, magne parens mundi (...)*, in which the double ‘paternal’ identity of Domitian (earthly and divine father of the world) is displayed. Smolenaars 2006, p. 239 points out the borrowing of this formula from Ennius, *Ann.* 203 Sk.: *divum pater atque hominum rex*.

the inchoative *reviresco* is used primarily for its basic meaning of ‘being green’, but in a broader sense it can also be employed as a synonym of youth<sup>94</sup>.

The hyperbolic climax in the eulogy for the emperor continues in the following verse (147), where Statius almost literally recalls a Virgilian passage (*Ecl.* 4, 4-5) but deprives it of its cosmological relevance for an encomiastic meaning<sup>95</sup>.

The hoped-for longevity formula<sup>96</sup> dedicated to the emperor reaches its climax in the last verses of the passage: the tones in the eulogy are enhanced and enriched by polysyllabic words (*saeculorum; abnepotibusque*) that are characteristic of a language that becomes more emphatic and openly flattering<sup>97</sup>. In addition to that, the use of these words compensates the short structure of the hendecasyllables, not traditionally meant to be the most suitable verse for *encomia*<sup>98</sup>.

In the following verses (149-151) the poet mentions two distinguishing *exempla* of longevity, to which Domitian’s destiny is compared: Nestor and Tython. Nestor<sup>99</sup>, king of Pylos, is mentioned for the extraordinary age he reached naturally (*placidus...annos*), but, as it is usual in *encomia*, Statius cunningly wishes to Domitian to live the same years, but in a perennial youth (*perpetua geres iuventa*). The second example once again shows the employment of the traditional encomiastic tool of the superiority of reality over myth: if compared to Tython, Domitian would surpass this topical model of old age<sup>100</sup> by enjoying a long youth. In the final wish, the Sibyl hopes that the emperor lives the same years of life she asked from Apollo, but without making the same mistake (*quantos ego Delium poposci*).

The three characters are presented as ideal models of longevity, often connected with other qualities as wisdom and experience, as in the case of Nestor. Even if in her speech the Sibyl

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<sup>94</sup> See OLD, p. 2070, 2b, s. v. *vireo*. The participle *virens*, as a matter of fact, in its first meaning of ‘being green’ is used in descriptions of trees and plants, as in the said case of Melior’s tree; in wider sense it is used to characterize youth or a physical and mental disposition that is particularly outstanding. The translation by Shackleton-Bailey 2003 of *seriem virentis aevi* as “the procession of slow time” misuses the immediate suggestion of the participle for an overall comprehension of the entire expression.

<sup>95</sup> See Coleman 1988, p. 133 *ad loc.*; Virgil’s passage opens the fourth Eclogue with the prophecy of the birth of a miraculous child, whose sovereignty will be a new golden age: *ultima Cumaevi venit iam carminis aetas;/magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo*. Newlands 2002, p. 316 ff. points out that the new golden age to which the Sibyl refers is Domitian’s; its realization however is overshadowed by the emperor’s lack of an heir (the *puer* who fulfils it in the Virgilian project). As I stated elsewhere in this work, I think that the hypotext here should not be read as a contrast, but more likely as a witty dialogue with traditional models that heightens the encomium.

<sup>96</sup> On the ‘risks’ implied in using this formula in encomiastic contexts see Geyssen 1996, pp. 127-133. However, Spawforth 2007, p. 139 convincingly argues that the wish for longevity reflected the historical concern that keeping the emperor on the throne for a long time meant political stability for Rome.

<sup>97</sup> Newlands 2002, p. 309 ff. analyses the Sibyl also as a ‘figure of excess’ in age, gestures and language.

<sup>98</sup> See again Newlands 2002, pp. 311-312 and Morgan 2010, pp. 52-73.

<sup>99</sup> His first appearance in the *Silvae* is along with Priam as an example of longevity in a poem for Domitian in *Silv.* 3.4, 103 ff.

<sup>100</sup> Tython’s old age is well-known already from the *Iliad*, 11, 1 ff. Aurora, his wife, asked Jupiter to give him immortality, but forgot (like the Sibyl) to ask for an eternal youth. See also Ovid, *Met.* 9, 421-422 *queritur peteres Pallantias (scil. Aurora, Pallas’ daughter) annos/coniugis esse sui*. The encomiastic inversion in our poem is that Domitian’s eternal youth is an improvement of the mythical models.

carefully points out the relevance of the mythical examples, she puts more emphasis on the superiority of Domitian's figure over his ancient models. As a matter of fact, the passage ends with the final *aprosdoketon*, the hyperbolic wish that the emperor lives an eternal youth and not a constant ageing (*seriem virentis aevi; perpetua/iuventa*)<sup>101</sup>.

In this specific imperial ideology, in which Domitian is portrayed as *Iuppiter in terra*, the 'serus in caelum redeas' motif comes to qualify the divine nature of the emperor, who is identified with an immortal god whose reign is now on earth.

The last section of the eulogy is brought back to an earthly and 'Roman' dimension (vv. 159-163):

scandes belliger abnuesque currus,  
*donec Troicus ignis et renatae*  
*Tarpeius pater intonabit aulae,*  
*haec donec via te regente terras*  
*annosa magis Appia senescat'.*

The *exempla* of things that will endure do not come from the mythical world, but from the Roman tradition: the holy fire of the temple of Vesta (*Troicus ignis*) and the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, (*renatae aulae*), both located in the Forum, in the centre of the city. In the *silva*, these buildings are mentioned as symbols of longevity, even if the temple of Jupiter was actually rebuilt (thus defined *renata aula*<sup>102</sup>) from Domitian himself in A.D. 82, two years after the fire that had damaged it. From an encomiastic perspective, the durability of the temple is subject to the emperor's action, the only power which can guarantee for it.

Kathleen Coleman reminds us<sup>103</sup> that the Capitol and the rites associated with it are commonly used as symbols of permanence, as we can see in a comparison with the famous passage from Horace, *Carm.* 3.30, 7: *usque ego postera/crescam laude recens, dum Capitolium/scandet cum tacita virgine pontifex*. We can find a similar image also in Virgil (*Aen.* 9, 446 ff.): *si quid mea carmina possunt, nulla dies umquam memori vos eximet aevo, dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum/accolet imperiumque pater Romanus habebit* and in other *loci* in the Statian collection (e.g. *Silv.* 1.6, 98 ss.) *quos ibit procul hic dies per annos...dum stabit tua Roma dumque terris, quod reddis, Capitolium manebit*. In the final verses of *Silv.* 4.3, this traditional lexicon is inverted: the emperor becomes the guarantee of the eternity of Rome.

<sup>101</sup> Worth mentioning on this regard is the similar wish expressed in *Silv.* 3.5, 101 *longa dominum renovare iuventa*.

<sup>102</sup> Coleman 1988, p. 134 *ad loc.* points out that the temple is called *aula* only in Statius and Martial. See *Silv.* 3.1, 10 *unde haec aula recens fulgorque inopinus agresti* and *Epigr.* 7.60, 1 *Tarpeiae venerande rector aulae*.

<sup>103</sup> Coleman 1988, pp. 134-135, but also Newlands 2002, p. 22. On buildings like the temple on the Capitoline, see also Darwall 1996.



The third and last wish, dedicated to the newborn *via Domitiana* but also extended to the emperor, is that it will outlive the most ancient amongst Roman roads, the *via Appia*<sup>104</sup>. If an effect of exaggeration is felt in the comparison between the roads, nonetheless the poet's wish might for once be realistic<sup>105</sup>. Besides, the conjunction *donec* plays in these verses a crucial role, with different meanings in its two occurrences. At v. 160 it introduces the idea of the durability of the *exempla* (the fire of Vesta and the temple of Jupiter): in this case then, the meaning of *donec* would be 'as long as', thus suggesting stability and durability against the wear and tear of time. The second *donec* at v. 163 on the other hand, more closely referred to the road, comes to mean 'till when', thus marking a point in the future when it will reach the same age of the *via Appia*. Nonetheless, a more effective *adynaton* is displayed in the use of the ablative absolute *te regente*, which projects Domitian's reign to an indefinite end.

As we have seen in this analysis of *Silv.* 4.3, the use of prosopopeia appears to be an effective encomiastic tool that the poet provides to fulfil his ultimate purpose, delivering an imperial eulogy in a witty way that is still able to respect the traditional rules of encomium. The representation of Volturnus and the Sibyl reveals the intent of playing with traditional figures according to their function, with humorous tones. The combination of complex, mythical voices and straight encomium hints also to Callimachus, where the fiction of the figures delivering the encomium does not affect the effectiveness of the praise<sup>106</sup>. Statius' encomiastic strategy is therefore a successful reinterpretation of traditional figures borrowed from Augustan models in the modern light of imperial encomium. The intertextual dialogue with the Augustan poets will feature also in the next section, where I will analyse the figure of Janus in a parallel reading of *Silv.* 4.1 and Ovid's *Fasti* 1.

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<sup>104</sup> The *Appia* takes its name from the magistrate who was responsible for its construction, in B.C 312., censor Appius Claudius Centemmanus Caecus. The *via Domitiana*, already built during the Republic but then mostly redone by Domitian, was a detour of the *Appia* (which connected Rome to Brundisium) towards the hinterland and the Southern Tyrrhenian coast. In *Silv.* 2.2, 12 Statius defines the *Appia regina longarum viarum*.

<sup>105</sup> Coleman 1988, p. 135 reads it as the usual aim of eternity. I am more inclined to agree with Shackleton-Bailey 2003, p. 266, n. 21, who argues that it is not impossible for the *via Domitiana* to become more ancient than the *Appia*, if we refer to the actual 'age' of the latter. The adjective *annosa*, referred to the *via Appia*, has a more negative sense that put the new road in a favourable light.

<sup>106</sup> On this aspect see Floridi 2004.

## b. *Silv.* 4.1 and *Fasti* 1: Janus as spokesperson: the outcomes in Ovid and Statius

The occasion for the composition of *Silv.* 4.1 is the inauguration of the seventeenth consulship of Domitian (95 A.D.), which according to tradition started with the new year. The taking on of this position was a relevant step in the political career and easily became a *topos* in encomiastic poetry. In the *Epistulae ex Ponto*, Ovid exploited this circumstance twice to try to secure his return to Rome<sup>107</sup>. In order to provide a *laudatio* conforming to the solemnity of the event, the encomium used to follow a series of *topoi* that had been inherited from the Hellenistic panegyric tradition<sup>108</sup>. The *silva* does not appear to be an exception and follows the traditional structure<sup>109</sup>. However, it is the presence of the god Janus that is the key for an innovative presentation of a traditional occasion.

The choice of Janus as a spokesperson in the poem is not new to Latin literature. He is the first character we encounter in Ovid's *Fasti*. Even if the affinity suggested by the god has already been pointed out<sup>110</sup>, an intertextual approach can clarify how a 'double' figure like Janus can be employed in both straight and ironic ways. The traditional features ascribed to him, such as longevity, authority and duplicity, in both Ovid and Statius are combined with a certain level of irony and ambiguity. According to my line of enquiry, I will examine the witty interrelation between the appearance and the speech of Janus in the presentation of the god in book I of the *Fasti* and in *Silv.* 4.1. I will demonstrate the inversion that occurs between the two compositions in the employment of the figure of the god. In the Ovidian poem, the serious appearance of the god contrasts with the humorous dialogue he establishes with the poet; on the other hand, in Statius we are presented with a reversed situation, in which Janus is presented in unusual and passive terms for a divinity, but the encomium he delivers is nonetheless 'straight'. The result is an innovative way to convey the imperial praise.

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In the *Fasti*, the figure of the god is given a particular emphasis, as he is the first deity to appear in the poem. After the proem, in which Ovid praises the emperor Germanicus for protection,

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<sup>107</sup> *Pont.* 4.4, on the occasion of the consulship of Sextus Pompeius in A.D 14.; *Pont.* 4.9 on the occasion of the consulship of Pomponius Graecinus, in A.D 17.

<sup>108</sup> All the themes suitable for official occasions were later codified in the rhetoric manual for the composition of a *logos basilikos* by Menander Rhetor. Cfr. *Rhet. Gr.* 3. 375. 5 ss. See also the *topoi* expected for the inauguration of the consular year in Coleman 1988, p. 64.

<sup>109</sup> See again Coleman, *ibidem*.

<sup>110</sup> Coleman 1988, p. 65: "St. introduction of Janus, however, owes more to Ovid". See more recently Newlands 2010 on Janus and the creation of a 'Domitianic calendar'.

the presentation of the god in occasion of the opening of the new year also marks the start of the poem itself. The verses dedicated to Janus' appearance describe it with the usual terms employed for divine epiphanies (*Fasti* 1, 63-74):

Ecce tibi faustum, Germanice, **nuntiat** annum  
inque meo primum carmine **Ianus** adest.  
Iane biceps, anni tacite labentis origo,  
**solus de superis qui tua terga vides**,  
dexter ades ducibus, quorum secura labore  
otia terra ferax, otia pontus habet:  
**dexter ades** patribusque tuis populoque Quirini,  
et **resera nutu candida templa tuo**.  
prospera lux oritur: linguis animisque favete;  
nunc dicenda bona sunt bona verba die.  
lite vacent aures, insanaque protinus absint  
iurgia (...)

The solemnity of the occasion is immediately suggested by the magniloquence of the hymnic tones employed. The religious deference that the poet pays to Janus is marked by particular linguistic devices commonly used in religious hymns: the anaphora of *dexter ades*<sup>111</sup> (vv. 67 and 69), the recurring forms of the *Du-Stil*, *tu/tuus* (*tua*, *tuis*, *tuo*) and the mention of the *nutus*, the nod ascribed to gods for expressing approval<sup>112</sup>. However, in the invocation the poet plays the role of 'master of ceremony' and gives instructions to the people with an incessant series of imperatives and jussive subjunctives: *ades* (67, 69), *resera* (70), *favete* (71), *vacant* (73), *absint* (73) *differ* (74).

In *Silv.* 4.1, after the description of the general euphoria and the celebrations for the new consulship, Statius introduces Janus as an authoritative and privileged spokesperson, to whom he entrusts the praise for Domitian (vv. 11-16):

**ipse** etiam immensi reparator maximus aevi  
**attollit vultus** et utroque a limine **grates**  
**Ianus agit, quem tu vicina Pace ligatum**  
**omnia iussisti componere bella** novique  
**in leges iurare** fori. **levat ecce supinas**  
hinc atque inde **manus** geminaque haec voce profatur

<sup>111</sup> Which probably also refers to the actual position of the temple of Janus in the forum. According to archaeological reconstructions (Coarelli 1974), the temple was quadrangular and therefore facing four sides of the *fora*: *Romanum*, *Augustum*, *Pacis*, *Transitorium*.

<sup>112</sup> As a matter of fact the verb *adnuere* also expresses the gods' favour. In this context, it is worthwhile to point out that this gesture was also ascribed to sovereigns as a sign of their divine nature. Cfr. e. g. Martial, 9.42, 6-7 *bis senos cito te rogante fasces/det Stellae bonus adnuatque* Caesar. Cfr. OLD, p. 51, s. v. *adnuo*. Hardie 1983, p. 193 states that "it has been plausibly suggested that in *Silvae* 4.1, as well as in 1.1 and in Alexandrian coinage, Domitian is associated with the functions of Janus-Aion, representing the eternity of Rome and the Empire."

The structure of these verses suggests the great expectations surrounding the mention of the god. Anticipated by *ipse* at the beginning of the verse, his name is revealed only at the end of the period and in a prominent position (*grates/Ianus agit*). In this way Statius achieves a feeling of suspense for the revelation of the god's identity. If the name is not immediately revealed, his gestures already mark the position he holds in the poem. However, the presentation of the god immediately turns the attention to the real object of praise, Domitian. The god's reaction strikingly resembles the fear felt respectively by Curtius in *Silv.* 1.1, 71-73, and as we will see, by Ovid at the sight of the two-faced god (*Fast.* 1, 147): *sumpsi animum, gratesque deo non territus egi*. Janus' reaction at the presence of the emperor in fact also carries epiphanic tones, but this time they refer to the divine persona of the emperor. As the poet in the *Fasti* plucks up courage to talk to the god and thanks him, so in the *silva* it is Janus that raises his face and thanks the emperor from the double<sup>113</sup> threshold of the temple.

In both poems Janus participates in the inauguration of the new year. In the *Fasti* Janus is invoked by the poet for his longevity and (presumed) authority over Roman matters. In the *Silvae*, the scenery presented is different and closer to what is the traditional inauguration of a new year. Nonetheless, the presence of Janus, even if specific in this context, is 'adapted' to the encomiastic purpose of the poem, the new consulship of Domitian. In the Ovidian poem there is not a specific allusion to a new consulship<sup>114</sup>, while in the *silva* the occasion is immediately revealed<sup>115</sup> and the primary role of the emperor set: he inaugurates the new year replacing Janus from the very start (vv. 1-2): *laeta bis octonis accedit purpura fastis/Caesaris, insignemque aperit Germanicus annum*.

The observation of the collective enthusiasm for the solemn event presents some similarities with the *Fasti*, where we have seen Ovid acts as 'master of ceremony' (vv. 65-74). In a similar way, in the *Silvae* Statius encourages the general acclamation (vv. 5-10):

*exsultent* leges Latiae, *gaudete*, curules,  
et septemgeminio iactantior aethera pulset  
Roma iugo, plusque ante alias Evandrius arces  
collis *ovet*; subiere novi Palatia fasces  
et rediens bis †sextus† honos<sup>116</sup>, precibusque receptis  
curia Caesareum *gaudet vicisse pudorem*.

<sup>113</sup> The duplicity of Janus is not subject to the ambiguous definition that occurs in the *Fasti*; on the opposite, here the doubleness of the god is employed to make the encomium even more effective (*utroque a limine; gemina...voce*). See also Hardie 1991, p. 53.

<sup>114</sup> Green 2004, p. 58 *ad* vv. 63-64, points out that the dedication of the *Fasti* to Germanicus is not connected to any specific occasion.

<sup>115</sup> *Purpura* is a metonymy for the consular toga. Cfr. Ov., *Pont.* 4.4, 25 *purpura Pompeium summi velabit honoris*; Mart. 8.8, 3-4 (to Janus) *te primum pia tura rogant, te vota saluent/purpura e felix, te colat omnis honos*. Cfr. Coleman 1988, p. 65 *ad loc.*

<sup>116</sup> For the philological problems of *sextus* and possible emendations see Coleman 1988, pp. 67-68 *ad* v. 9.

Two distinguishing features, *modestia* and *pudor* represent the reaction of Domitian, who is ‘forced’ against his will by the solicitous popular favour to wear the consular stripe again. The verbs underline the joy and compliance felt during the awarding of the title (*exsultent, gaudete, ovet, gaudet*). The complexity of the language is enriched by a hint to the lexicon of love poetry, for which “the senate’s persuasion of a reluctant Domitian to assume the consulships is, through the use of amatory vocabulary, likened to the success of an (elegiac) lover, who rejoices when his mistress surrenders her chastity in response to his pleading”<sup>117</sup>. We will see how the presence of elegiac expressions is a recurrent feature in the poem.

Since from the very start of the *Fasti*, in the description of Janus Ovid plays with the theme of duplicity, which is one of the most peculiar features of the god. Therefore, the reference to the *terga* at v. 66 (and later at vv. 90-91) acquires an unusual ironic taste, since in a high context it acknowledges a physical oddity<sup>118</sup>. The most famous feature of the god's, the ability to look both sides, is traditional, and is mentioned for example when Janus appears in the *concilium deorum* in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* (9.2, 2-4):

illo dimisso primus interrogatur sententiam Ianus pater. Is designatus erat in kal. Iulias postmeridianus consul, homo, quantum via sua fert, qui semper videt ἅμα πρόσω καὶ ὀπίσω.

It does not come as a surprise that Ovid takes advantage of the theme of formal duplicity for a contradictory portrait of Janus. The poet’s intent is disclosed when the gap between Janus’ physical appearance and speech creates an effect of disorientation. As a matter of fact, the god’s appearance before the poet corresponds to the typical divine epiphany, to which the suppliant reacts with fear and terror<sup>119</sup> (*Fast.* 1, 93-98):

*haec ego cum sumptis agitare mente tabellis,  
lucidior visa est quam fuit ante domus.  
tum sacer ancipiti mirandus imagine Ianus  
bina repens oculis obtulit ora meis.  
extimui sensique metu riguisse capillos,  
et gelidum subito frigore pectus erat.*

<sup>117</sup> So Vessey 1986, p. 2798 and n. 151: “For *pudor*, see *OLD* s. v. 1514, 2 (b); with *vincere*, e. g. Ovid, *Am.* 3.10, 29 *victus amore pudor*. Lovers’ *preces* are an erotic commonplace.”

<sup>118</sup> King 2006, pp. 72-78 explores the idea of ‘looking behind the back’ in the Janus’ episode as a sign of political and social anxiety. Even if there might be this element in Ovid’s description of the duality of the god, nonetheless it is my belief that the first effect is to create irony and a feeling of ‘domesticity’ in the portrayal of Janus: a coexistence of serious and light features that also belongs to the Statian god.

<sup>119</sup> Cfr. *Silv.* 1.1, 71-73 for the similar reaction of Curtius. See *infra* pp. 60-61.

It has been reasonably noticed that Janus' appearance before the poet whilst he is writing could possibly reinforce the connection with Callimachus' *Aitia*<sup>120</sup>. If that was the case, Janus would also play the role usually associated with the Muses or Apollo, the source for poetical inspiration. The choice of Janus as the first god to appear in a poem on the Roman religious calendar may convey a deep authority to his figure, but Ovid's typical wittiness plays with the subject in many ways. The recent scholarship on the *Fasti* has indeed revealed the ultimate ironical approach of Ovid to the traditional material<sup>121</sup>, and the representation of Janus makes no exception.

Ovid's aim to create the Roman version of Callimachus' *Aitia* necessarily shapes the *Fasti* as a continuous dialogue between the poet and his informants. As a matter of fact, it is the informative aspect to be the most distinguishing feature of the speeches, but nonetheless Ovid is able to adapt it in original ways.

After his epiphany before the poet, Janus explains his origin (name, shape, role) with a light and ironical approach that highly contrasts with the first impression he gave, both to Ovid and the reader. In opposition to the urging questions asked by the poet, Janus hardly gives straight answers, reinforcing instead the mystery that surrounds him<sup>122</sup>. The most peculiar trait of the god, his duplicity, in Ovid's portrayal combines humour and wittiness. These blurred features can find a *raison d'être* in the very nature of Janus, who was identified in ancient times with Chaos (v. 103: *me Chaos antiqui...vocabant*)<sup>123</sup>; antiquity is in fact one of the main reasons why the poet invokes Janus and questions him about the ancient ages. In a poem dedicated to the calendar, Ovid presents the association of Janus with the first day of the year more just as an old god than the appropriate divinity to invoke on that occasion.

However, Janus' authority acts as a guarantee for a contradictory truth, and allows him to play with the several aetiologies connected with him. When asked by the poet about the origins of his name, Janus' register varies from serious to jovial (vv. 127-130):

inde vocor Ianus; cui cum Ceriale sacerdos  
imponit libum farraque mixta sale,  
**nomina ridebis**: modo namque Patulcius idem  
et modo sacrifico Clusius ore vocor.

<sup>120</sup> Green 2004, p. 72 *ad* v. 93 and p. 76 *ad* vv. 105-110; see though already Barchiesi 1994, pp. 230 ff. for a description of Janus as inspirer of the literary program of the *Fasti*.

<sup>121</sup> But see already Fränkel 1945, p. 241, who described Janus as a "good old uncle", pointing out Ovid's playfulness. For more recent bibliography on the *Fasti* see Newlands 1995 (humour and *double entendre* in Ovid's approach to the tradition); Herbert-Brown 2002 and King 2006, pp. 66-102 for social and historical issues.

<sup>122</sup> See Green 2004, p. 68 for a brief recount of the questions that remain unanswered.

<sup>123</sup> Barchiesi 1994, pp. 230 ff. identifies this motif as a possible reference to other literary works which also begin from the primordial chaos, such again Callimachus' *Aitia* (hence their inner connection with the *Cosmogony* by Hesiod) and the *Metamorphoses* as well.

The important role of doorkeeper of heaven is suggested by the ancient names of Janus, which remind of the actions of opening (*Patulcius*) and closing (*Clusius*); however, the solemn role suggested by these appellatives is immediately lightened by the playful complicity established with the poet by the phrase *nomina ridebis*. Again, Janus' duplicity seems to represent a more complicated reality.

The role of doorkeeper carries elegiac suggestions of the figure of the *ianitor*. As we have seen, the relationship between Domitian and Janus is presented in a reversed order, for which it is the emperor who connects Janus with peace and who makes him observant of the Roman rules: *quem tua vicina Pace ligatum...iussisti...novique/in leges iurare fori*<sup>124</sup>. The participle *ligatum*, as suggested by Newlands, can be read in both a metaphorical and literary sense, as the mention of the vicinity of the temple of Peace is based on the actual topography of the forum<sup>125</sup>. I think that the suggestion of the verb can in fact go further to imagine Janus again, like in the *Fasti*, tied to the door of the *domus* of Peace. The subjugation of the humble *ianitor* is yet again a *topos* of love elegy, where he is often kept on the chain (*Am.* 1.6, 1: *ianitor-indignum!-dura religate catena*). The fact that in the *silva* it is the emperor himself to put Janus in a subdued position increases the former's *auctoritas* over the god. In the Statian narration in fact Janus' role appears to be totally subject to Domitian's power. Like in the *Fasti*, Janus' active role as peacemaker is reduced to the duties of a loyal guardian. The unusual coexistence of ironic humbleness and *auctoritas* seems to associate the portrait of Janus in the *Fasti* with the *Silvae*, with a difference: whilst in Ovid the humour is displayed by the contrast between a grandiose appearance and a playful speech, in Statius it is the encomium that collides with the ironic subjugation of the god.

In the long 'interview' between the poet and Janus in the *Fasti*, among the various duties ascribed to the god, the role of doorkeeper of the temple of peace and the responsibility for the maintenance of peace in Rome appear to be the most relevant. As we have seen, according to his very nature, the two-faced god becomes a symbol of an ambiguous and contradictory truth, which makes it difficult to judge his trustworthiness. As a matter of fact, a common feature of the characters in the *Fasti* is the unreliability of their aetiological explanations, which has been regarded as an evidence for Ovid's polemical approach towards traditional religion<sup>126</sup>. An example

<sup>124</sup> For the reversed situation for which it should be the consul to swear at the presence of Janus and not vice versa, see Coleman 1988, pp. 71-72 *ad loc.* and Hardie 1983, p. 193 and n. 71.

<sup>125</sup> Newlands 2002, p. 303. Cfr. also Coleman 1988, p. 71: "the implication that Domitian surpasses a god in authority is a technique of flattery which St. uses elsewhere". Cfr. for an example the attitude of the river Volturnus in *Silv.* 4.3, 67 ff.

<sup>126</sup> This approach characterizes in particular Newlands 1995. In her study she focuses on the inner contradictions in the *Fasti* and in the portrayal of the individual characters. The human and the divine figures who fill the calendar in her view would therefore be manipulating the facts for their own benefit (p. 68): "their choice and manipulation of *causae* reflect their personality and biases". In my opinion the *Fasti*, along with the *Metamorphoses*, are a bold aspiration to try to represent the complex reality of the world in a witty way. The fragility of values as truth and honour is a well-known

is represented by Janus in his account of the aetiology of his temple (1, 259-276). His narration goes back to the Sabine conflict and to the particular moment in which the enemy, with the help of Juno, attempts to conquer Rome. The characterization of Janus as the guardian of peace and a long-living god strongly conditions his narration and adds a touch of gentle humour to the episode. In the description of the events, Janus makes little reference to the war, possibly in virtue of his peaceful nature, but on the other hand he is keen on giving details about his intervention by the opening and closing (v. 272) of his temple. A sense of playfulness seems to arise in these lines, where the narrator ends up manipulating the story he is telling in order to stress the very moment of his divine intervention to his audience (the poet and the readers)<sup>127</sup>.

After the explanation of the various names he has held from antiquity, Janus goes on to describe his divine role (vv. 115-126):

accipe quaesitae quae causa sit altera formae,  
hanc simul ut noris officiumque meum.  
quicquid ubique vides, caelum, mare, nubila, terras,  
***omnia sunt nostra clausa patentque manu.***  
***me penes est unum vasti custodia mundi,***  
***et ius vertendi cardinis omne meum est.***  
cum libuit Pacem placidis emittere tectis,  
libera perpetuas ambulat illa vias:  
sanguine letifero totus miscebitur orbis,  
ni teneant rigidae condita Bella serae.  
***praesideo foribus caeli cum mitibus Horis***  
***it, redit officio Iuppiter ipse meo.***

In the description, Ovid heightens Janus' role of guardian, thus revealing his ambition to hold a prominent power. The choice of words is very careful in this regard and balanced on general terms that highlight the idea of universality. Hence the asyndeton at v. 117 "helps to convey a sense of boundless sovereignty"<sup>128</sup> and a feeling of ecumenicity of the god's power. In the scenery depicted by Janus, the actions of opening and closing doors are expressed by the vague *omnia*, that stresses again the sense of infinity. In the following two lines, the actual function of doorkeeper becomes more evident and specific, but it is still expressed in terms of universal relevance; yet, the contrast between the magniloquence of the language and the actual description is striking. The commitment of Janus to his role is defined by the powerful expression *me penes*<sup>129</sup>, and reinforced in its exclusivity by the adjective *unum*; in the same line though, the high level of responsibility is applied

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issue of the late years of Augustus' time, and the poet's attempt is to put the relativity of the modern world into a traditional framework.

<sup>127</sup> For an analysis of the passage see Green 2004, pp. 121-122 and Murgatroyd 2005, p. 34.

<sup>128</sup> Green 2004, p. 80 *ad loc.*

<sup>129</sup> *Penes* is usually associated with gods or outstanding human figures. See Green 2004, pp. 243-244 *ad v.* 531.



to the *custodia mundi*, defining in fact Janus as a *ianitor*<sup>130</sup>. His role as doorkeeper becomes even more specific with the following mention of the *ius vertendi cardinis*, a concise expression that turns the simple earthly act of turning handles into the control of the axles of the world<sup>131</sup>. The distorted reality of the *Fasti* is here perfectly displayed by the manipulation of Janus, whose elevated language heightens the exclusiveness of his power. His role of doorkeeper is connected directly with the control of the temple of Peace<sup>132</sup>, but the description of an earthly duty is again exaggerated: the letting of peace in the world appears, in Janus' words, more as a direct effect of his presence on earth (*cum libuit*), than the consequence of shutting war in the temple by closing the doors (conveniently expressed in a vague tone: *rigidae...serae*)<sup>133</sup>. The *climax* of the passage is displayed in the last couple of verses, where Janus affiliates himself to Jupiter for the exceptional power he holds; nevertheless, his words confirm the gap between what he claims it to be and his real position in the sovereignty of the world. The control he declares to have over Jupiter consists in fact in the role of doorkeeper at the gates of heaven (*praesideo foribus caeli*)<sup>134</sup>. Once again, Ovid plays with the poetic material with a humorous touch, and makes the last verse the rhetorical *climax* of the passage.

Ovid's initial aim to keep aloof from the irreverence of the love subject of his early career is debated in the *Fasti* by the use of some mutual *topoi*<sup>135</sup>. In erotic poetry, the *ianitor* is always pictured as a humble figure of an inferior status, but nonetheless in the *Fasti* we find Janus using the common image to describe his own role (vv. 135-140):

omnis habet geminas, hinc atque hinc, ianua frontes,  
e quibus haec populum spectat, at illa Larem,  
utque sedens primi vester prope limina tecti  
ianitor egressus introitusque videt,  
sic ego perspicio caelestis ianitor aulae  
Eoas partes Hesperiasque simul.

The mention of the duplicity of the door (outside and inside) clearly plays with the doubleness of the god himself, who also happens to have 'two foreheads' (*geminas...frontes*), and therefore can be

<sup>130</sup>Hardie 1991, p. 53: "*custodia mundi*, certainly, but *custos* is also the *vox propria* for the humble *ianitor* (...)". In our discourse I find worth mentioning that in *Silv.* 1.1 the role of Curtius is quite similar: he is described as *loci custos* (v. 66) where the equestrian statue of Domitian is built. The combination of humbleness and irony becomes even more interesting if we think about the 'straightness' of Curtius' encomium.

<sup>131</sup>See again Green 2004, p. 80 *ad loc.*

<sup>132</sup>For the role of Janus as guardian of peace see also *Fast.* 1, 253 and 281; *Hor.*, *Ep.* 2.1, 255; *Mart.* 8.66, 11.

<sup>133</sup>It is not clear though if the temple of Janus should have enclosed peace or war, since several passages in the *Fasti* referring to it are contradictory. See King 2006, p. 100.

<sup>134</sup>Green 2004, p. 81 *ad loc.*: "(...) Janus highlights the most impressive implication of his liminal duties".

<sup>135</sup>Green 2004, p. 84 *ad v.* 138: "for the poet who professes maturation from love elegy (...), it is ironic that he should still find himself conversing with a *ianitor*".

identified with the door after which he is named (*ianua*). Given the premises of the authority Janus claims to have for his role as doorkeeper of heaven, the poet plays with his character again when the god needs a ‘earthly’ comparison (vv. 137-138) to explain his position as heavenly *ianitor* (vv. 139-140). Janus’ attempt to elevate his status from the human parallel is also suggested by the specific wording, hence *perspicio* is felt like an improvement of *videt*, and *caelestis...aulae* the heavenly counterpart of *limina tecti*.

The reality of the *Fasti* reveals its difference from the celebratory scenario of the *silva* when Janus compares the early times of Rome to the current age of Augustus<sup>136</sup>. With an initial detachment from the present times, Janus explores the morality of early Rome and the degeneration occurred in the modern days. However, as a spokesperson of Roman tradition, Janus gradually tries to compromise between the ancient *mos maiorum* and the golden splendour of the Augustan age. His duplicity is once more displayed in the recounting of the past and present of Rome (v. 225): *laudamus veteres, sed utimur annis*. The traditional Hesiodic *topos* of the nostalgia for ancient times and the complaint about the modern era (*Op.*, vv. 174-175: μηκέτ’ ἔπειτ’ ὄφελλον ἐγὼ πέμπτοισι μετεῖναι/ἀνδράσιν, ἀλλ’ ἢ πρόσθε θανεῖν ἢ ἔπειτα γενέσθαι) finds in Janus’ words an opposite statement, for which the present time is in fact a new golden age<sup>137</sup>. Through the voice of the god, Ovid confirms his fondness for modern times and portrays Janus as a mouthpiece of the contradictory reality of the Augustan age.

In *Silv.* 4.1, the celebration of Domitian’s age is included in Janus’ encomiastic speech (vv. 17-43):

*‘salve, magne parens mundi, qui saecula mecum  
instaurare paras; talem te cernere semper  
mense meo tua Roma cupit; sic tempora nasci,  
sic annos intrare decet. da gaudia fastis  
continua; hos umeros multo sinus ambiat ostro  
et properata tuae manibus praetexta Minervae.  
aspicis ut templis alius nitor, altior aris  
ignis et ipsa meae tepeant tibi sidera brumae?  
Moribus, alme, tuis gaudent turmaeque tribusque  
purpureique patres, lucemque a consule ducit  
omnis honos. quid tale, precor, prior annus habebat?  
dic age, Roma potens, et mecum, longa Vetustas,  
dinumera fastos nec parva exempla recense,  
sed quae sola meus dignetur vincere Caesar.*

<sup>136</sup> See Green 2004, pp. 97-99 for a summary of the key-points of the passage.

<sup>137</sup> However, as Barchiesi 1996, pp. 234-237 points out, Janus does not seem to hope also for a moral renewal of the golden age. In addition to that, in Janus’ description the ancient rituals and sacrifices appear as sumptuous as the modern ones. The god himself admits that *vix ego Saturno quemquam regnante videbam/cuius non animo dulcia lucra forent* (vv. 193-194).

ter Latio deciesque tulit labentibus annis  
 Augustus fasces, sed coepit sero mereri:  
 tu iuvenis praegressus avos. et **quanta recusas,**  
**quanta vetas! flectere tamen precibusque senatus**  
**permittes hunc saepe diem.** manet insuper ordo  
 longior, **et totidem felix tibi Roma curules**  
**terque quaterque dabit. mecum altera saecula condes**  
**et tibi longaevi renovabitur ara Tarenti.**  
 mille tropaea feres, tantum permitte triumphos.  
 restat Bactra novis, restat Babylona tributis  
 frenari; nondum gremio Iovis Indica laurus,  
 nondum Arabes Seresque rogant, nondum omnis honorem  
 annus habet, cupiuntque decem tua nomina menses.’

Statius entrusts a privileged spokesperson with the encomium to create a separate level in the narration in which Janus and Domitian can share the same *Weltanschauung*. Therefore, the eulogistic intent is accomplished in an easy yet effective way. Domitian, in his role of earthly counterpart of Jupiter, enjoys the privilege of being flattered by a minister of the heavenly sovereign. The humble presentation of Janus contrasts effectively with his speech, which is constructed with sacral and religious tones, and creates an innovative form of estrangement in the readers. One could argue that Statius’ playfulness follows up Ovid’s attitude throughout the *Fasti*<sup>138</sup>. However, in the *silva* it is the encomiastic frame that calls for a witty and sophisticated representation of the poetic voices.

After the traditional greeting *salve*, usually pronounced by the suppliant before the divinity<sup>139</sup>, Janus turns to Domitian with the appellative *magne parens mundi*, in fact identifying him with Jupiter<sup>140</sup>; it is worth remembering though that this epithet was also a commonplace for Janus, who in this way associates himself to the emperor: (Mart. 10.28, 1) *sator...mundi*. The double divine connotation confirms once again the role inversion between the two-faced god and Domitian<sup>141</sup> and is reinforced by Janus himself.

In his powerful role of god of the beginnings and antiquity, Janus co-opts Domitian in his duty of renewing the years: *saecula mecum instaurare paras* and *altera saecula condes*, with a clear

<sup>138</sup> See Newlands 1995, p. 7: “The *Fasti* constantly invites different perspectives and readings and offers no final resolution of them. The combination of Janus’ venerable presence yet comic appearance, which Ovid calls attention to, anticipates the skilful interplay in the poem between Ovidian urbanity and the nationalistic themes of Roman religion and history. The *Fasti*, like Ovid’s two-faced Janus, has a wit and humour about it that to some extent belie its complexity of meaning.”

<sup>139</sup>Cfr. e. g. Verg., *Georg.* 2, 173 *salve, magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus*; in the *Silvae*: 1.1, 87 *salve, laeta dies, meliorque revertere semper* and 4.3, 139 *salve dux hominum et parens deorum*.

<sup>140</sup>As in *Silv.* 4.3, 128-129 *en! Hic est deus, hunc iubet beatiss/pro se Iuppiter imperare terris*.

<sup>141</sup>The inversion seems to be confirmed in *Silv.* 4.2, 60-61: (...) *saepe annua pandas/limina, saepe novo Ianum lictore salutes*.

reprise of the Augustan idea of a new golden age (*Aen.* 6, 792: *aurea condet saecula*). The encomiastic effect is here achieved with a hyperbole, for which god and emperor collaborate for the inauguration not only of the new year, but of future centuries, as suggested by the plural *saecula*<sup>142</sup>.

The innovation in presenting a traditional encomium in new ways does not only rely on the role inversion, but also on some particular *formulae* employed by Janus in his speech. The role-play in the *silva* does not compromise the observance of the traditional scheme expected for the particular occasion. As stressed by Coleman in her commentary, the *silva* still presents many of the codified *topoi* associated with the inauguration of a new year and a new consulship<sup>143</sup>: wishes for a good year (vv. 18-19), the general acclamation (vv. 20-22 and 25-27), the good omens (vv. 23-25), the long-life wish (vv. 35-38). In addition to motifs that go back to the Hellenistic tradition, the military glory and the conquest of new territories have a particular relevance, as a typical element of the imperial propaganda that goes back to Augustus (vv. 40-43)<sup>144</sup>. However, the playfulness displayed by the *ianitor* once more shows how Statius is able to play with literary genres in a witty way. We have already seen how the poet borrowed some *topoi* from the imagery of love poetry in order to stress the mutual respect between the people and the emperor (vv. 5-10).

In his speech, Janus draws the emperor's attention to the joyful reaction of the people with the expression *aspicis* (v. 23), usually employed by suppliants to ask divinities to look upon them, but also frequent in love poetry (Ovid, *Am.* 1. 6, 17)<sup>145</sup>. The idea of the *amor* that the people show for the emperor continues with the recurring *adnominatio*, used by Janus to tie Domitian to himself and create a general approval: *mecum* (v. 17); *talem te cernere semper/mense meo tua Roma cupit* (vv. 18-19); (...) *ipsa meae tepeant tibi sidera brumae/moribus aequa tuis?* (...) (vv. 24-25); (...) *mecum altera saecula condes/et tibi longaevi renovabitur ara Tarenti* (vv. 37-38).

We find here another use of terms borrowed from the language of love for encomiastic purposes (*preces*), a conventional term of both religious hymns and yet also common in erotic language<sup>146</sup>. In the poem, after the mention of Augustus as the only sovereign who could bear the

<sup>142</sup> So Coleman 1988, p. 73 *ad loc.*: "instead of merely renewing the annual cycle, Janus and Domitian work together on a grand time-scale of *saecula*". Besides the general long-life wish, she also sees in these verses a possible allusion to the inauguration of the *Ludi Saeculares*. This idea is as a matter of fact also suggested at v. 37 (...) *mecum altera saecula condes*. See also Hardie 1983, pp. 192-193.

<sup>143</sup> Coleman 1988, p. 64 and pp. 78-79 remarks the importance of military campaigns in the East as a way to associate Domitian to the conquests of Alexander and to contribute to the expansion of the Roman empire.

<sup>144</sup> Coleman 1988, p. 79 *ad v.* 41 correctly points out that in the imperial propaganda the maintenance of peace inside the boundaries is not in contradiction with the campaigns for conquering new lands. Shackleton-Bailey 2003, p. 249, n. 15 argues instead that Statius simply does not pay attention to this inconsistency.

<sup>145</sup> Coleman 1988 *ad loc.* does not point out this aspect, but I think it is relevant since it is yet another evidence of the reversed roles of Janus and Domitian. Watson 1982, pp. 96-97 also notices that at the beginning of the verse *aspice* underlines an extraordinary event. Cfr. also TLL II 830, 57 ff.

<sup>146</sup> For the *preces* pronounced by lovers to their *puellae* cfr. Ovid, *Am.* 2.2, 66; *Ars.* 1, 710 and 715; Catul. 50, 18; Prop., 1.1, 16; Lygd., 4., 76.

comparison with Domitian, Janus stresses again the *modestia* of the emperor in permitting the triumphs (vv. 31-35). Again, as if he were a *puella* whose resistance is finally loosened, Domitian will allow the celebrations and consent to the Senate's *preces* (vv. 34-35). In the same verse another expression borrowed from elegy was already pointed out by Vessey, who however based this argument on the reading *promittes...diem* (v. 35)<sup>147</sup>. This *iunctura* would thus confirm the existence of similarities in the language employed in the praise of the emperor and of a *domina*.

After his prayer, Janus symbolically closes the door of his temple and Statius resumes the role of narrator (v. 44): *sic Ianus clausoque libens se poste recepit*. The poet then puts forward his personal wish to the emperor, following in Janus' footsteps (vv. 46-47): (...) *longamque tibi, rex magne, iuventam/annuit atque suos promisit Iuppiter annos*. The *topos* of the divine favour that grants to the emperor a hyperbolic long life is here renewed by the effective appellative *rex magne*, which is here to be intended with a positive connotation<sup>148</sup>: in the transfigured reality of the *silva*, the emperor is, in fact, an absolute monarch.

The narratological strategies explored by Ovid and Statius represent an instrument of literary *variatio*, which leaves space for humorous tones. If the ironic, detached and playful perspective is a typical feature of Ovidian poetry, no one would probably expect to find a comparable approach in imperial encomiastic poetry, usually the less suitable for this type of innovations. The portrait of Janus in the first book of the *Fasti* appears to hover between self-consciousness and irony, and disappoints the reader's expectation for a serious representation of a traditional divinity. Janus' linguistic attempts to give importance to his role of *ianitor* seem to be always frustrated by the reality that hides beneath words. Moreover, Ovid seems also to engage in a long-distance relationship with his literary past of love elegy. Therefore, the already multi-faced representation of Janus also acquires the sad humour of the humble *ianitor* that has to mediate between the lover and his mistress. As we have seen, some references to the lexicon of love are also verifiable in Janus' speech in Statius' *silva*, but with a different purpose from Ovid: confirm the universal consent over Domitian's power.

<sup>147</sup> Vessey 1986a, p. 2800, n. 152: "*Promittes...diem* is a conceived inversion of the erotic idiom *noctem promittere* (...). Oddly enough, Juvenal at 7.84 uses the same phrase of Statius' attitude to his audience (...), but the tone is probably disapproving. Juvenal's choice of the noun *dulcedo* (85) with reference to Statius' poetry is, nonetheless, by no means inapt."

<sup>148</sup> The corrections for the reading *rex* (M) (*dux* by Markland; *rex* referred to *Iuppiter* and only *magne* to Domitian, by Leo) appear unnecessary. Coleman 1988, p. 82 *ad* v. 46 argues that "St. has constructed an imaginary situation which allows him to use the term *rex* as the apogee of flattery: Jupiter, *rex deorum*, grants Domitian longevity to equal his own (*suos annos*), i.e. immortality; hence Domitian will live for ever on earth as its ruler, equivalent to Jupiter in heaven." Cfr. also Newlands 2002, p. 265.

I have showed that the witty and in some way comical representation of Janus in the *silva* aims to heighten the figure of Domitian in an ideal comparison with the god. In this way, Statius reverses the strategy adopted in the *Fasti*: whereas in Ovid the god tries to boast about his role as doorkeeper with comical effects, in Statius the appearance of Janus is ironically lessened, and the encomium is delivered in favour of Domitian. The result is a lively and witty strategy of praise, for which Statius reinterprets figures of the Roman tradition (Janus, like Voltumnus and the Sibyl in *Silv.* 4.3) in an engaging dialogue with the imperial propaganda.

### c. *Silv. 1.1: Curtius and the equestrian statue of Domitian*

The choice of discussing the first poem of the collection at the end of my examination of prosopopeia and direct encomium derives from the multiple literary models it refers to. I will analyse in fact how the representations of the equestrian statue of Domitian and of the ‘voice’ for the encomium (the horseman M. Curtius), build on a comparison with Virgil and Ovid. After having discussed Virgilian and Ovidian influences in *Silv. 4.3* and *4.1* respectively, *Silv. 1.1* offers combined references to the Augustan models. Accordingly, I will argue that the character of the Curtius (responsible for the direct encomium of Domitian) is also presented with witty and ironic tones, as it is typical of Statius’ encomiastic strategy.

In the prefatory epistle that opens the first book of the *Silvae*, Statius discloses the main principles of his poetics. The exegetic value that the first letter assumes is very important for the definition of Statius’ encomiastic strategy. In the *praefatio*, Statius explicitly dedicates the first book to Domitian (ll. 17-18): *primus libellus sacrosantum habet testem: sumendum enim erat ‘a Iove principium’*. This programmatic statement refers to the necessity of inaugurating the collection with a precise role for the emperor, both main character and dedicatee<sup>149</sup>. Since from the very start, the ‘light’ tone of the collection of occasional poems is combined with the aims of traditional panegyristic poetry. The first book does in fact start ‘*a Iove principium*’, thus conferring to the first poem in particular the features of a *laudatio dei*. Moreover, as Bruce Gibson has argued<sup>150</sup>, ‘beginning from Jupiter’ is also a reference to writing epic, hence the opening also alludes to the engagement with the epic intertext.

The occasion for the composition of the first *silva* is the dedication of a colossal equestrian statue of Domitian. Hence, the *ecphrasis* of the monument reveals its own function of being the literary device with which the poet is able to portray a specific imperial symbolism from the very start<sup>151</sup>. In order to fulfil the introductory role, the first appearance of the emperor recalls the figure of Aeneas in the *Aeneid*; the Roman perspective of the poem is also reinforced by the strategical position of the statue of Domitian in the forum<sup>152</sup>. Recalling the figure of Aeneas may appear a bold move, but at a closer analysis it is clear how it contributes to put the current sovereign of Rome

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<sup>149</sup> The figure of the emperor is omnipresent in the work, even *in absentia*, when he is not mentioned. See Newlands 2002, p. 508: “the emperor (...) dominates the poem. His presence is everywhere directly felt, but his actual person is nowhere described”.

<sup>150</sup> Gibson 2006b, p. 168.

<sup>151</sup> For an overlook on how Statius interacts with the tradition of *ecphrastic* poetry see Hardie 1983, pp. 119-120 and more specifically for *Silv. 1.1* Marshall 2011.

<sup>152</sup> Geyssen 1996, pp. 35-63. More recently Dewar 2008, pp. 65-83 has tried to reconstruct the historical collocation of the equestrian statue in the forum, taking the *silva* as the main reference.

on the same footing of the one who once founded it. The parallel between Aeneas and Domitian, in other words, evokes the idea of a new birth of the city and the empire.

By putting the two figures in comparison one with the other, Statius cannot but measure himself with Virgil: the ‘Aeneadic’ construction of Domitian’s *persona* requires, for the very nature of intertextuality, a confrontation between the two texts. It is not surprising that Statius’ aim does not appear less ambitious than Virgil’s, as he states in the prefatory *epistula*: “*centum hos versus, quos in ecum maximum feci, indulgentissimo imperatori postero die quam dedicaverat opus, tradere ausus sum*”<sup>153</sup>.

The poem begins with a series of questions about the origin of the equestrian statue. The interrogative sequence of the first lines (vv. 1-7) does not cast any doubt on the divine nature of the monument; hence, amongst the hypothetical makers Statius numbers only divine or inhuman entities (*Silv.* 1.1, 2-5):

(...) caelone peractum  
fluxit opus? Siculis an conformata caminis  
effigies lassum Steropen Brontenque reliquit?  
an te Palladiae talem, Germanice, nobis  
effinxere manus (...)

The *quaestio* about the creator of the statue allows the poet to suggest parallels with his authoritative model, the *Aeneid*. The workshop of the Cyclops Steropes and Brontes, located on mount Etna, is imagined as an ideal location for the assemblage of the equestrian statue. The mention of the two Cyclops is not casual, since their technical skills have already forged Aeneas’ shield in book 8 of the *Aeneid* (vv. 424-425): *ferrum exercebant vasto Cyclopes in antro,/Brontesque Steropesque et nudus membra Pyragmon*. The famous ecphrasis of Aeneas’ shield functions as a model for Statius, who however adds the further detail of the Cyclops’ fatigue (*lassum*) to hint at the superiority of Domitian (and the *silva*) over the Augustan precedent. The third and last question eventually resolves the doubts on the statue’s identity. From an initial blurred and ambiguously defined image (v. 1, *quae...moles*), the description becomes more precise (*opus*; *effigies*) and finally culminates with the identification of Domitian with the subject of the poem (*Germanice*).

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<sup>153</sup> The reading *iussus* is transmitted from the *codex unicus Matritensis* (M). The correction *ausus sum* (Sandström) has now been accepted by most editors as a sign of Statius’ active role as encomiastic poet. The motif of the poetic ‘audacity’ (opposed to a passive role that *iussus* suggests) is also consistent with the claimed speed of composition (*postero die*). This reading is accepted in the edition by Courtney 1990. For this philological issue see also Geysen 1996, p. 28 and Rühl 2006, p. 316, n. 89. More recently Seager 2010, p. 370 has defended again the reading *iussus*, arguing that “it could be that Statius wrote the poem on his own initiative, then Domitian learned of its existence and demanded to see it, so that *tradere* means exactly what it says and no more”.



With the mention of the Cyclops, the reference to Minerva also plays an important role in the context of the imperial propaganda. According to tradition, the goddess patronizes arts and in mythology she is herself an accomplished artist, hence her presence in these first verses of the *silva* does serve important purposes. Firstly, to put the statue under the protection of Minerva dignifies its craftsmanship, and secondly, the connection that is made between the goddess and Domitian supports the cultural propaganda of his devotion to her<sup>154</sup>.

Considering the relevant interrelation between the *silva* and the *Aeneid*, in the following verses some intertextual analogies become more visible, as the equestrian statue is in fact compared directly to the Trojan horse, whose story is notoriously told in the second book of the *Aeneid* (*Silv.* 1.1, 8-18):

Nunc age fama prior notum per saecula nomen  
 Dardanii miretur equi, cui vertice sacro  
 Dindymon et caesis decrevit frondibus Ide :  
 hunc neque discissis cepissent Pergama muris  
***nec grege permixto pueri innuptaeque puellae***  
***ipse nec Aeneas nec magnus duceret Hector.***  
***adde quod ille nocens saevosque amplexus Achivos,***  
***hunc mitis commendat eques: iuvat ora tueri***  
***mixta notis, bellum placidamque gerentia pacem.***  
 Nec veris maiora putes: par forma decorque,  
 par honor. (...)

The comparison with the famous horse is openly declared<sup>155</sup>, and in a way this gives a chance to the statue to surpass its illustrious literary model. In the *Aeneid*, the description of the wooden horse highlights its fame and hugeness, virtues that granted it a *notum per saecula nomen*. Even if Rome has not been founded yet, the perspective is already a thoroughly Roman one: the Greeks are *saevi*, as the point of view was already that of Aeneas himself. The situation presented seems to invite again a confrontation between the texts, and this allusion may find a confirmation at v. 12, where the Virgilian hypotext seems to figure next to the Statian text: *nec grege permixto pueri innuptaeque puellae // feta armis. Pueri innuptaeque puellae* (*Aen.* 2, 238).

After the allusion to the Trojan horse, the attention is abruptly diverted to the Domitianic statue (*hunc*), which strategically lacks all the features that in the *Aeneid* defined the *fatalis machina*<sup>156</sup>. The disparity is firstly marked by the exceptional height of the equestrian statue, which

<sup>154</sup> See Suet., *Dom.* 15.

<sup>155</sup> For the limited reprises of the image of the Trojan horse in Latin contexts see Austin 1964 p. 35, *ad* 2, 15.

<sup>156</sup> In the second book of the *Aeneid* the characteristics referred to the wooden horse always underline its deceiving nature: v. 30, *donum exitiale*; v. 31, *Danaum insidias suspectaque dona*; v. 151, *machina belli*; v. 237 *fatalis machina*; v. 240, *illa...minans*; v. 245, *monstrum infelix*; v. 264, *doli*.

even Troy itself would not have been able to contain (v. 11). The recall of the Virgilian text becomes even more consistent in the following verses, when the poet mentions the Trojan heroes Aeneas and Hector. Even though their presence here also represents the Trojan *virtus*, nonetheless even their heroic status is eclipsed by the colossal statue.

This characterization of the imperial image appears to have a benevolent connotation, in opposition with the cruelty of the Trojan horse. This idea finds confirmation in the following verses, when Statius openly marks the deep gap between the two horses: while one (*ille nocens*) hides in its cavity the cruel Achaei, the other (*hunc*) is held by a *mitis eques*. The portrait of the emperor is still complex, since the unwarlike disposition is balanced with a declaration of strength (vv. 15-16). Coherently with the official propaganda, benevolence and inflexibility are the two faces of the imperial power, and in the person of the emperor they both coexist in a perfect equilibrium.

The same idea is conveyed through the comparison of Domitian's sword to the giant Orion's (vv. 43-45):

it tergo demissa chlamys, latus ense quieto  
securum, magnus quanto mucrone minatur  
noctibus hibernis et sidera terret Orion.

Newlands' negative interpretation of this comparison<sup>157</sup> argued that the presence of mixed signs of war and peace hints to the threatening power of the emperor. However, this combination of strength and benevolence represents a key feature in the encomiastic strategy<sup>158</sup>.

What emerges from this imagery in fact is the realization of the philosophical ideal (already developed by Seneca<sup>159</sup>) of the *rex sapiens*: a sovereign who is able to maintain the peace but is also capable of terrible punishments for whoever tries to subvert it<sup>160</sup> (*bellum placidamque gerentia pacem*). The Virgilian principle of *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos* (*Aen.* 6, 853) is here transferred to Domitian.

The idealized sovereign is realized in person, and the praise is screened through the piece of art representing him, in conformity with the traditional rhetoric of *mimesis*. Even though his presence on earth is verifiable in real terms, he is entirely identified with a divinity: the statue symbolizes the emperor's *persona* in its divine and human features.

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<sup>157</sup> Newlands 2002, pp. 58-59.

<sup>158</sup> Marshall 2011, p. 338 argues convincingly that the comparison with Orion is mainly based on size.

<sup>159</sup> See e. g. *De Clem.* 1.8.2, 4-5 *tibi in tua pace armato vivendum est*.

<sup>160</sup> For this interpretation see Rosati 2006, p. 50. Newlands 2002, pp. 50 ff. reads these verses and the expression *ora...mixta notis* an ambiguous judgement of the imperial *clementia* by the poet. At pp. 59-60 she also seems to ignore what Statius explicitly says about the benevolent nature of Domitian's horse in comparison to the Trojan one, when she argues that "despite the poet's protestations, there lurks beneath the dominant discourse of praise and uncertainty about the meaning of Domitian's statue and the concept of power it embodies".

The colossal statue rises from the Roman forum to the sky, thus establishing a connection between itself and the earth (vv. 32-33: *ipse autem puro celsum caput aere saeptus/templa superfulges et prospectare videris*) with a possible hint to the phenomenon of apotheosis. The proximity to the vault of heaven (*puro...aere*) heightens the divinity of Domitian and makes his statue an idealised representation of the synthesis of the human and heavenly nature of the imperial *persona*. The same idea can in fact be found in Martial (*Ep.* 9, 20): *haec mundi facies, haec sunt Jovis ora sereni,/sic tonat ille deus, cum sine nube tonat*. In his analysis of the ecphrastic description of the equestrian statue<sup>161</sup>, Adam Marshall notices how Statius plays with the rigidity of the statue and its life-like movements (vv. 48-51), thus enhancing the performative function of the poetic medium in ‘giving life’ to the work of art. To this I would like to add a parallel with another epigram of Martial, where a possible allusion to the equestrian statue shows a similar strategy (*Ep.* 4.3):

Aspice quam densum tacitarum vellus aquarum  
defluat in voltus Caesaris inque sinus.  
Indulget tamen ille Iovi, *nec vertice moto*  
*concretas pigro frigore ridet aquas,*  
*sidus Hyperborei solitus lassare Bootae*  
*et madidis Helicen dissimulare comis.*  
Quis siccis lascivit aquis et ab aethere ludit?  
Suspikor has pueri Caesaris esse nives.

The opposition between the rigidity of the statue (*nec vertice moto*) and the human-like actions implied by *ridet* helps qualifying the artefact as a concrete manifestation of the imperial persona, which is both authoritative and benevolent.

The presence on the right hand of Domitian (37-40) of the little statue portraying Minerva finally validates both the gods’ protection and his divine nature<sup>162</sup>. Still, the poet provides several clues to prove the emperor’s true superior status and his credibility as a *praesens deus*. One of these happens to be a traditional feature associated with gods<sup>163</sup>, the extraordinary weight, which appears to be particularly effective in this context since it applies to a colossal monument (vv. 19-20 *magnoque...pondere...tanto*; vv. 56-57 *Vix sola sufficiunt inessaque pondere tanto/subter anhelat humus*).

<sup>161</sup> Marshall 2011, pp. 329-335.

<sup>162</sup> As mentioned by Geyssen 1996, p. 45, the reference to Minerva is relevant also because Domitian officially worshipped the goddess. See e. g. *Mart.* 9.3, 10 *Pallada praeterea: res agit illa tuas*.

<sup>163</sup> See for example Ovid, *Met.* 15, 693-694: (...) *numinis illa/sensit onus pressa estque dei gravitate (scil. Esculapius) carina*; *Met.* 6, 72-73 *bis sex caelestes medio Iove sedibus altis/Augusta gravitate sedent* (in literal and metaphorical sense); the same is for *Met.* 1, 207 *substitit ut clamor pressus gravitate regentis (scil. Jupiter)*. See Statius, *Theb.* 7, 750 ff. on Apollo. The motif is applied again in the description of Domitian as a god in *Silv.* 4.2, 26 ff. See also *OLD*, pp. 1400-1401, 6-7, s. v. *pondus*.

If what the poet has done so far is drawing an idealized portrait of the emperor through the *alter ego* of the statue, the real climax of the encomium in the *silva* is reached with the introduction of a spokesperson, entitled to deliver the direct praise of Domitian. The noise arising from the works of building the statue (vv. 62-65) wakes up the *loci custos*, the mythical figure who guards the Roman forum. A long periphrasis (vv. 66-67) reveals his identity as the legendary horseman M. Curtius, and the following pieces of information that Statius provides identify him with one of the two known persons of that name<sup>164</sup>. This element of poetic choice is relevant in the encomiastic contest, since it represents a clear application of the Callimachean principle of selection of a particular version of an aetiological myth. Here, as Kathleen Coleman rightly points out, “he (*scil.* Statius) chooses the most romantic and the most widely attested version”<sup>165</sup>. The chosen legend tells that when a chasm appeared on the ground in the middle of the forum, Curtius did not hesitate to commit himself to it with his horse, in order to prevent the city from collapsing. One can say that the figure of Curtius serves two main purposes. Firstly, Statius can introduce the aetiological element of the origin of the lake, and secondly, the explanation of Curtius’ heroic act makes him the most suitable voice for delivering the imperial praise. As a matter of fact, the identity of the narrator is revealed by his gesture rather than the simple mention of his name<sup>166</sup>; the words used for his description fully legitimise him in his function of *laudator*.

The hero’s mythical voice gives dignity and credibility to the subject of the praise, but Curtius still combines an attitude of personal dignity and obedience at the same time. Even if he is in possession of full authority, the hero in fact acknowledges his inferiority to Domitian, and at the sight of the statue he is terrified and dips his head in the lake before finally speaking (vv. 71-73):

ac primum ingentes habitus lucemque coruscam  
expavit maioris equi terque ardua mersit  
colla lacu trepidans, laetus mox praeside viso

Dazzled by the light cast from the colossal equestrian statue, Curtius seems frightened at first (*expavit*); as soon as he recognizes the rider’s identity (*praeside viso*), the initial fear (*trepidans*) immediately (*mox*) turns into joy (*laetus*). His change of mood is skilfully concentrated in one verse, and underlined also by the metrics, separating the two key-words (*trepidans* and *laetus*).

<sup>164</sup> For the possible identifications see Coarelli 1974, p. 80.

<sup>165</sup> Coleman 1999, p. 68.

<sup>166</sup> Vv. 66-67: *ipse loci custos, cuius sacrata vorago/famosique lacus nomen memorabile servant*; vv. 69-70: (...) *movet horrida sancto/ora situ meritaque caput venerabile quercu*. On the narrative role of Curtius see also Hardie 1983, pp. 131-132.

Therefore, the revelation of the divine nature of the statue is portrayed as a traditional epiphany of a god. As I have anticipated in the analysis of *Silv.* 4.1, this scene can be compared to book one of Ovid's *Fasti*, when the poet reports his fear in the moment he comes to the presence of the god Janus (*Fast.* 1. 92-98):

haec ego cum sumptis agitare mente tabellis,  
*lucidior* visa est quam fuit ante domus.  
*tum sacer ancipiti mirandus imagine Ianus*  
*bina repens oculis obtulit ora meis.*  
*extimui sensique metu riguisse capillos,*  
*et gelidum subito frigore pectus erat.*

The two scenes show some motifs recurring in epiphanic manifestations, such as fear and surprise as a reaction to the god's luminosity<sup>167</sup>. If the character of Curtius presents some Ovidian features, the scope he fulfils differs greatly from Janus. In the *Fasti*, Janus plays mainly an informative role, which helps the plot unfold, as happens in epic works; in the *silva*, Curtius' speech has a precise encomiastic function, and can be assimilated to the same dynamics occurring in *Silv.* 4.1. Not only the purpose of the spokespersons in the text is different, but also the narrative frame in which they are set is: if Ovid in the *Fasti* portrays himself both as the narrator and a character, Statius on the contrary defers completely to Curtius for the delivering of the praise.

The direct speech is then entrusted to an illustrious voice that gives hymnic tones to the imperial *laudatio*<sup>168</sup> (vv. 74-83):

‘Salve, *magnorum proles genitorque deorum,*  
*auditum longe numen mihi.* nunc mea felix,  
nunc veneranda palus, *cum te prope nosse* tuumque  
immortale iubar vicina sede tueri  
concessum. semel auctor ego inventorque salutis  
Romuleae: *tu* bella Iovis, *tu* proelia Rheni,  
*tu* civile nefas, *tu* tardum in foedera montem  
longo Marte domas. Quod<i te> nostra tulissent  
saecula, temptasses me non audente profundo  
ire lacu, sed Roma tuas tenuisset habenas’.

Curtius addresses the statue as it was Domitian himself, dissolving any distance between art and reality. Again, two periphrases identify the subject of the praise. The expression *magnorum proles*

<sup>167</sup> See Green 2004 for the commentary on the *Fasti*, pp. 72-73. On the theme of the gaze and the (in)visibility of Domitian see McCullough 2008-9, pp. 148-152.

<sup>168</sup> See in particular the iteration of the pronoun *tu*, according again to the definition of the *Du-Stil* by Norden 1956, pp. 149 ff. The same happens also in *Silv.* 4.2. 14-16: *Tene ego, regnator terrarum orbisque subacti/magne parens, te, spes hominum, te, cura deorum,/cerno iacens?* (...).

*genitorque deorum*, which may seem contradictory, acquires its full meaning when it specifically refers to the divine nature of the emperor: he in fact happens to be at the same time son and father of gods, since his role is to be the earthly counterpart of the celestial Jupiter. The mention of being father to gods obviously also refers to the emperor's future heirs. The iteration of *nunc* and Curtius' head-bowing may also offer a further suggestion, the homage of Rome's mythical past to the rosy present of the imperial age. The emperor represents the ideal connection between Curtius' underworld (*longe*) and the present age (*nunc...prope*)<sup>169</sup>. The sophisticated language used in Curtius' speech fulfils not only the encomiastic content, but also, in a broader sense, the rhetorical function of an elevated style. In other words, the poet marks a distance between himself and the spokesperson by adopting a different linguistic register which allows him to heighten the tone of the *laudatio* and therefore distinguish it in the *silva*<sup>170</sup>.

Nonetheless, the serious pattern of Curtius' speech is lightened in the last lines of the passage, where the solemn language contrasts with the scene imagined with a humorous hint. The traditional metaphor of the 'reins of power' is here wittily brought back to its literary meaning, as it applies to an equestrian figure. The high context of the imperial eulogy does not prevent the poet from employing a playful imagery and language which often culminate in a climax. One could object that the combination of serious and light tones jeopardizes the consistency of the encomium and makes it hard to determine the poet's opinion. My suggestion is that Statius' wittiness should not be interpreted as subtle subversion, but rather as a playful *variatio* of the traditional themes of panegyric. In this frame, the presence of an alternative voice in the poem acts as a rhetorical tool for delivering encomia in an unusual and entertaining way.

Counted as a celestial god, the emperor can boast his superiority over the other gods since his presence is not only a *rumor* that might be heard (*auditum longe numen mihi*), but assumes an earthly tangibility (*te prope*)<sup>171</sup>.

<sup>169</sup> Newlands 2002, p. 64 unnecessarily interprets the connection between the two worlds as unsettling: "the arousal of Curtius from the Underworld suggests, moreover, that the statue disturbs the boundaries between earth and the Underworld (...)".

<sup>170</sup> See Coleman 1999, p. 70: "That is not the way that Statius customarily expresses himself in the *Silvae*; but since Curtius, far from being an ordinary person, is actually someone from the grand context of legend, he can employ elaborate diction and phrasing that accord with the dignity of his addressee." See though the more balanced position of Nauta 2008, p. 146, n. 13: "I doubt however, whether Coleman is right in arguing that the technique gives the poet access to a higher level of language than he would otherwise command. She suggests, *e. g.* that Curtius' terms *genitor* and *proles* could not have been employed by Statius *in propria persona* (69-70), but in fact they often are (in 5.3 Statius addresses his own father twice as *pater*, but five times as *genitor*), and similar remarks could be made of her other instances. 'Statius' own voice' is not just 'the voice of a social and political non-entity' (74), but also the voice of a poet."

<sup>171</sup> The traditional trouble in giving evidence of the god's presence is even more striking when the humans try to take advantage of it. An infamous example is the tragic story of Niobe, told by Ovid in the sixth book of the *Metamorphosis*, where the Theban queen claims her divine kinship by opposing her concrete presence on earth to Latona's, that is instead only *audita*, and *in toto* to all the other gods as well (*Met.* 6, 170-171): '*quis furor auditos' inquit 'praeponere*

Despite the new encomiastic setting, it is reasonable to envisage in this section an intertextual pattern based on the Lucretian famous *Hymn to Venus* that opens his poem<sup>172</sup> (*DRN.* 1. 1-9):

Aeneadum *genetrix*, hominum *divomque* voluptas,  
 alma Venus, caeli subter labentia signa  
 quae mare navigerum, quae terras frugiferentis  
 concelebras, per te quoniam genus omne animantum  
 concipitur visitque exortum lumina solis:  
*te*, dea, *te* fugiunt venti, *te* nubila caeli  
 adventumque *tuum*, *tibi* suavis daedala tellus  
 summittit flores, *tibi* rident aequora ponti  
 placatumque nitet diffuso lumine caelum.

The praise for the goddess reveals an earthly and heavenly relevance that appears to be very close to the portrait of Domitian. As is well known, Venus symbolises the mother of the Romans descending from Aeneas on earth, but at the same time represents the inspiring principle of Epicurean *voluptas* that rules the universe<sup>173</sup>. The goddess' epiphany follows also here the scheme of a religious hymn, with frequent anaphoras of the second-person pronoun (*te*, *dea*, *te...te...tuum...tibi*). At a closer reading, the evident textual relation between the two speeches is not only based on a linguistic frame, but also it is reasonable to think that even a political meaning is being shared. In the hymn, Lucretius addresses the goddess as a guarantee of peace for Rome: *nam tu sola potes tranquilla pace iuvare/mortalis* (vv. 31-32); *funde petens, placidam Romanis, incluta, pacem* (v. 40); *omnis enim per se divum natura necessest/immortali aevo summa cum pace fruatur* (vv. 44-45). The image of Mars bowing his head on Venus' lap becomes a metaphor of the suspension of conflicts (vv. 32-37).

The Statian text portrays the emperor in a way that closely resembles the Lucretian model. As a matter of fact, Curtius defines himself (but it is reflected on Domitian as well) *auctor...inventorque salutis/Romuleae* (vv. 78-79), acknowledging in this way the emperor's responsibility for the salvation of Rome and as a consequence identifying this mission with Venus'. Even the metonymy that allows Statius to number Domitian's military achievements (v. 81: *tardum in foedera montem longo Marte domas*) refers to the traditional opposition between Mars and

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*visis caelestes?*'. Niobe grounds her virtue on the assimilation with a divinity and at the same time on the human values that nourish her pride but that will also cause her downfall.

<sup>172</sup> I have noted that neither Geyssen 1996, p. 115, n. 60 in his listing of examples, nor Newlands 2002, pp.46-73 pointed out the Lucretian hypotext as a potential model for Curtius' speech.

<sup>173</sup> See Bailey 1947, vol. 2, p. 591, *ad* v. 1: "love is the cause of creation, so Venus is the life-giving power to the world".

Venus. The intertextuality then reveals more than a rhetorical function, thus serving the encomiastic purpose of associating Domitian with one of the patron deities of Rome.

In Curtius' last words, the reversed relationship established with the object of the *laudatio* acknowledges again the inferiority of the mythical figure in comparison with the human, the emperor. The association of the two entities that until this point has only been suggested *in nuce* becomes real when the hero imagines, not without humorous tones, what the destiny of the city would have been if the emperor had made the same sacrifice of plunging in the lake. In Curtius' hypothesis, Domitian would have been urged by an even stronger courage (*temptasses me non audente profundo/ire lacu*), but he would have probably been retained to perform the brave act from the same Rome he was trying to save (*sed Roma tuas tenuisset habenas*). The rhetorical grandeur displayed by Curtius "succeeds in attributing to Domitian superhuman bravery and patriotism while simultaneously expressing the loyal sentiment that he is more use to Rome alive than dead"<sup>174</sup>. As a *deus visus* and *praesens*, Domitian must rule the empire on earth and not from the heavens.

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In this first chapter of my thesis I have analysed the employment of prosopopeia in the three *Silvae* which deals directly with the imperial power (*Silv.* 4.3, 4.1 and 1.1). Building on the works of Kathleen Coleman and the existing commentaries on the poems, my analysis has focussed more in detail on the presence of literary models, and how Statius aims to create unique interpretations of traditional figures, like the river Tiber and the Sibyl. In particular I have showed how Statius adapts these models to their encomiastic role of spokespersons. What has emerged is a witty and ironical engagement of Statius' characters with their 'straight' Augustan models. This approach has led to reconstruct a specific strategy of celebrating the empire in a witty and sophisticated way. In this sense the comical portrait of the river Volturnus has been interpreted as an extraordinary manifestation of the imperial ability to control nature. It is in the combination of 'straight' encomium and the oddity of the river's shape that represent the originality of Statius' encomiastic

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<sup>174</sup> Coleman 1999, p. 69. It is the *topos* known as '*serus in caelum redeas*'. This *topos* is named after the famous Horatian *carmen* 1.2, 45. On this and more generally on the success of the idea in panegyrics see Nisbet-Hubbard 1970, p. 37 *ad v.* 45. On Curtius' speech see also Geyssen 1996, pp. 96 ff. and Rühl 2006, pp. 320 ff. More ambiguous as usual the interpretations by Newlands 2002, pp. 60-65, according to whom Curtius' words would cast some doubts on an empire founded on several wars. Even though she marks the difference between Curtius' and Statius' poetic voice, she reads this choice (here and elsewhere) as a way for the poet to keep his distances from an excessive flattering tone. More balanced to me is the opposite approach of Coleman 1999, p. 79 "to suppose that he (*scil.* Statius) co-opts mythological spokespersons in order to convey compliments too extravagant for him to utter himself would be to misconstrue the essence of encomium".



strategy. In a similar way, I have also showed how the Flavian poet reinterprets the figure of the Sibyl as a new voice for the celebration of the empire.

The analysis of the figure of Janus in *Silv.* 4.1 and in Ovid's *Fasti* aimed at exploring the Ovidian influence in the witty portraits of prosopopeia in the *Silvae*. Once again the intertextual analysis has showed how Statius combines straight encomia with a comical representation of the character delivering the imperial encomia, reversing Ovid's combination of the god's appearance and speech.

Finally, in the analysis of *Silv.* 1.1, I have analysed the combination of Ovidian features with Virgilian models. The comparison of the equestrian statue of Domitian with the Trojan horse of *Aeneid* 2 and the figure of Curtius shows in fact a witty treatment of traditional models.

## 2. The transfiguration of reality

As the title suggests, in this second part of my thesis I will explore different ways in which Statius builds his encomiastic discourse for the imperial court. I will analyse how the rhetoric of ‘excess’ and flattery operates in creating a successful language of praise.

Flattery and figured language in fact are fundamental in imperial panegyrics, but they also prove to be the most antipathetic to modern readers. As a consequence, as I mentioned in the introduction, part of the scholarship on the *Silvae* has tried to find signals of mockery or even hostility to the imperial court throughout the collection. Although a certain ambiguity and cautiousness of language is consistent with dealing with political power, in Statius the traditional encomiastic *tropoi* and lexicon are also widely displayed. Moreover, a good example of how the Statian ‘excessive’ rhetoric works effectively can be found in the recent work by R. Alston and E. Spentzou, where Statius’ poetics are examined in the treatment of grief and mourning<sup>175</sup>. The public manifestation of private *dolor* (in the case of funerals) is set beyond social boundaries and becomes the essence of the *epikiedion*. In a way, the extremism of the emotions and feelings displayed in the entire collection should not be interpreted as negative, ambiguous or even manneristic, but as a unique interpretation of encomiastic poetry.

In line with the Seneca’s quote with which I opened my thesis, in this section I will show how the theme of falsity and excess plays a pivotal role in shaping Statius’ encomiastic strategy. *Silv.* 4.2 is a clear example of this ‘poetics of the excessive’, in particular due to its special destination, a *gratiarum actio* for the emperor Domitian. The special participation of the poet to the banquet hosted by Domitian leads to a direct encomium, and therefore will feature separately in this section. I will argue that the transfiguration of the reality of the court is the key for interpreting the encomiastic strategy operating in the poem, and not necessarily a subtle way to represent Domitian as a distant tyrant.

The other poems examined in this section deal less directly with the figure of the emperor, who nonetheless still features prominently in the encomiastic frame of the compositions. The reading of *Silv.* 3.4 will investigate how the idealised portrait of the imperial eunuch Earinus reflects a specific aesthetic canon of the imperial figure. The analysis of *Silv.* 1.4 will examine the representation of Rutilius Gallicus as the ideal officer of Domitian. Finally, *Silv.* 1.2 and 5.1 will be read together as examples of the transfiguration of elegy and feminine role models (Violentilla and Priscilla), also in relation to the male figures of Stella and Abascantus. In these poems the direct encomium of the addressees also reflects a more general celebration of the imperial authority.

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<sup>175</sup> Alston-Spentzou 2011, pp. 88-98.

### a. Direct encomium

#### (i) *Silv. 4.2: Parva loquor necdum aequo tuos, Germanice, visus: transfiguration of the poet and his world*

The poem examined in this chapter has attracted a vast range of hostility from scholars, who have read it as a combination of flattery, ambiguity of language and 'doublespeak'. Most of the examinations of the poem in fact aimed to show the subversive message undergoing in the praise of Domitian.

In particular, the recent contributions on the poem have focussed on the ambiguity of the portrait of the emperor and on the epic intertextuality<sup>176</sup>. According to these analyses, Statius hides some criticism on the imperial figure under the encomiastic appearance, and portrays Domitian as a distant tyrant according to the image transmitted by later authors (Suetonius, Tacitus, Dio, Pliny and Juvenal).

Although the coherent evidence of sources hostile to Domitian needs to be taken into consideration, some questions can be raised about this specific poem and its intent. If we agree with Kathleen Coleman on the possible circumstances that led to the composition of the *silva*, Statius composed it in advance for the banquet offered by the emperor at the imperial palace, and possibly recited it at the end of the feast<sup>177</sup>. As claimed by the poet in the *epistula praefatoria* at the beginning of book 4, often the poems were recited in private occasions before being collected and published (*praef.*, ll. 27-28): *deinde multa ex illis iam domino Caesari dederam. et quanto hoc plus est quam edere!*. In this particular case, Statius even boasts that Domitian's approval means more than an official publication. Therefore, this explicit claim suggests that an appreciation of the poem from the imperial court is probable.

*Silv. 4.2* is also relevant in the discourse of patronage in the imperial age. The *gratiarum actio* (*Praef.*, l. 6 *gratias egi*) performed by Statius as a thanksgiving for the invitation to an imperial banquet represents the maximum *beneficium* a poet-client can receive. It is a well-known fact that with the political power becoming more autocratic, the social dynamics of *amicitia* needed to adapt as well. The policy of exchange of *dona* and *beneficia* is well explained by Seneca in the *De Clementia* (1.4, 3-4): *qui referre gratiam debet, numquam consequitur, nisi praecessit*.

The practical side of any relation of *amicitia* is clearly defined: to a gift received should correspond a bigger one from the recipient. As the verb *contendere* suggests, the competition can

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<sup>176</sup> On the first aspect see Braund 1996, Newlands 2002, pp. 260-283, McCullough 2008-9, pp. 155-158 and (with a note on v. 43) Hulls 2007. For the latter see Malamud 2007.

<sup>177</sup> Coleman 1988, pp. 83-84.

involve *amici*, or in our case, *patroni* and *clientes*<sup>178</sup>. The mutual exchange of gifts (being them either practical or literary) is also well stated in the rhetoric treatise of Menander Rhetor (368.15 Sp.). In our context, the increasingly autocratic power held by the emperor signified that returning any imperial favour was perceived as a difficult task: poet-clients like Statius and Martial had only their own poetry to offer, and therefore needed to be bold. Therefore, the extravagant and excessive characterisation of this *gratiarum actio* negotiates the imperial protection, while celebrating the absolute power of Domitian.

Another point I would like to make before moving specifically onto the analysis of the *silva* is a more general consideration of the rules of encomium applied to this poem. Much effort has been put by scholars into spotting any break of the rules of praise throughout the poem, with particular attention to subversive meanings and hidden criticism.

In the frame of the mechanism of the *beneficium* as I have explained *supra*, encomia and poems of praise represent the only gift a poet can give to their patrons. Our *silva* offers a perfect example of a poetic *donum* given to the emperor in return for the invitation received. I think it can be safely assumed that both Statius and Domitian were aware of these dynamics, hence it is not always necessary to look for hidden messages in such an official praise of the imperial figure. Returning a favour to the emperor required poetry to be bold, extraordinary, without any boundaries. If one looks at this kind of poetry in this way, and not as concealed subversiveness, the 'excessive' character of our poem might not appear so antipathetic to require a serious justification.

One always has to be careful when applying labels to literary genres. For example, what in the *Silvae* is implicitly allowed can be interpreted in a different light, as we can see from this passage in which Galba talks about *adulatio* (Tac., *Hist.* 1.15, 24-29):

inrumpet adulatio, blanditiae et pessimum veri adfectus venenum, sua cuique utilitas. etiam si ego ac tu simplicissime inter nos hodie loquimur, ceteri libentius cum fortuna nostra quam nobiscum; nam suadere principi quod oporteat multi laboris, adsentatio erga quemcumque principem sine adfectu peragitur.

Tacitus shows his concerns about the possibility of advising the emperor without flattery, which does not belong to the realm of historiography. Is it then possible to make a similar statement in opposite terms about encomiastic poetry? Literary encomia are not expected to be history, nor to be faithful to the true facts narrated: imagination, suggestion and exaggeration are all valid tools in the hands of the encomiast<sup>179</sup>.

<sup>178</sup> On the mechanism of *beneficia* in the *De beneficiis* see now Picone-Beltrami-Ricottilli 2009.

<sup>179</sup> Menander Rhetor in his manual stresses *passim* the importance of amplification for the *logon basilicon*; see e.g. 368. 5 ff. Sp.

I would like now to turn to the *silva* that has created so much antipathy in the scholarship. The poem can be labelled as a *gratiarum actio* of the poet, or, as I have explained before, as a gift to reciprocate the emperor's invitation to the imperial banquet. This is stated by Statius in the prefatory *epistula* (l. 6 *secundo gratias egi sacratissimis eius epulis honoratus*). However, as the social dynamics existing between *clientes* and *patroni* become more unilateral, the traditional poetic *recusatio* acquires also a practical meaning: Statius declares he will not be able to offer to the emperor a gift of equal value (vv. 5-10):

ast ego, cui sacrae Caesar nova **gaudia** cenae  
nunc primum dominaque dedit contingere mensa,  
qua celebrem mea vota lyra, **quas solvere gratis**  
**sufficiam?** non, si pariter mihi vertice laeto  
nectat adoratas et Smyrna et Mantua lauros,  
digna loquar. (...)

The poet stresses the extraordinary opportunity he has been given by the emperor to 'make it' to the imperial court (*contingere mensa*): the spatial idea of reaching is transformed into an advancement in the social scale<sup>180</sup>. In this context, the implication of some of the words Statius employs in this passage deserve a closer analysis. In the lexicon of *beneficia* as explained by Seneca in the *De beneficiis*, the recipient should always accept gifts with joy (*gaudium*) and gratitude (*gratia*) (*De Ben.* 2. 34, 1-5). According to the philosopher, acceptance is mandatory in the circle of *beneficia* (to give, to receive, to reciprocate). Oddly enough, in the *silva* Statius seems to apply this rule carefully, when he thanks the emperor (*solvere gratis*) for the extraordinary gift (*nova gaudia*). A joyful acceptance of the gift is in fact crucial. If the recipient acknowledges the gift without *gaudium*, the *donum* loses its value as a *beneficium* and ends up being just a practical negotiation, putting the recipient in the unpleasant position of owing their benefactor. It is relevant that a poet-client like Statius carefully portrays Domitian's invitation as a selfless act: according to the rules of *beneficia*, the only act of thanksgiving is what is required to respect the rule (*De Ben.* 2. 31, 5 *sed malo loco beneficium est, nisi et excussis manibus esse grato licet*).

Moreover, the expression *solvere gratis* recalls a similar *iunctura* borrowed from the lexicon of clientage pronounced by Claelius in Cicero's *Epistulae ad familiares* (8.12, 1):

Pudet me tibi confiteri et queri de Appi, hominis ingratissimi, iniuriis; qui me odisse, quia magna mihi debebat **beneficia**, coepit et, cum homo avarus ut **ea solveret** sibi imperare non posset,

<sup>180</sup> Sic Coleman 1988, pp. 85-86 *ad loc.* also for the explanation of the reading *contingere* I also accept here, against Courtney's *non surgere* (which unnecessarily anticipates the effect at line 17).

occultum bellum mihi indixit (...)

This passage confirms the risk involved in the idea of *solvere beneficia*. Seneca warns his readers about what an excessive anxiety of returning a gift might cause (*De Ben.* 6. 26, 2):

Optas, ut ope indigeat: hoc contra illum est; optas, ut ope tua indigeat: hoc pro te est. Non succurrere vis illi, sedolvere; qui sic properat, solvi vult, nonolvere.

The insistence on *olvere* through the polyptoton (*olvere, solvi,olvere*) shows how a recipient can be eager to return a gift just to be free from any obligation. In this circumstance, the *beneficium* is transformed back again in a practical exchange. In the frame of the imperial court, where Domitian effectively holds an absolute power, the fact that Statius describes his poetical duty as a way to *olvere grates* might be a signal of a true negotiation. The representation of the poet-client and poetry as a *praeconium* for mediating with the imperial authority ends up acquiring a very practical meaning.

Therefore, Statius' concern is not just a literary affectation and neither necessarily an ambiguous attitude towards the topic<sup>181</sup>: one could look at it as a social matter of a poet being put in the privileged but difficult position of returning an imperial favour. The fact that the gift that Statius can offer is of course a poetic product is another matter, for which the claim of insufficiency of even the greatest models (*Smyrna et Mantua*) is traditional<sup>182</sup>. This *topos* is in fact essential in any kind of encomia, where the *laudandus* is beyond any standard and only describable through *adynata*<sup>183</sup>. As Coleman notes<sup>184</sup>, “the *topos* of inability points up the poetic excellence which is (claimed to be) demanded by an imperial theme”. Through this declaration of inadequacy, Statius acknowledges the extraordinary status of Domitian as the patron *par excellence*, while at the same time he sets the basis for his own poetic performance. In addition to that, the poetic *recusatio* is also displayed by the narrative choice of transfiguring reality into a mythical frame, as one of the typical trait of the encomiastic poems in the collection<sup>185</sup>. The projection of the narration onto a divine level grants the success of the encomiastic strategy.

Finally, a point that needs to be pointed out concerns the literary genre of the poem and its

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<sup>181</sup>As suggested by Malamud 2007, pp. 229-230.

<sup>182</sup>Newlands 2002, p. 279 also states that the *recusatio* allows Statius to claim a role similar to Virgil and Homer: “moreover, the poet alone clearly controls the representation of the regal banquets”.

<sup>183</sup>As once again is recommended by Menander Rhetor for all epideictic subjects, but especially for the *logos basilikos* (368.22-369.2 Sp.).

<sup>184</sup>Coleman 1988, p. 86 *ad v.* 8.

<sup>185</sup>Cfr. Coleman 1999, p. 73: “the poet's lack of authority is replaced by the 'authority' of a mythological alibi”; “encomium accomodates an element of fiction that transcends the realm of verifiable truth and harnesses imaginative writing to convey the tenor of the message”.

elevated style. As we have seen, Statius declares he cannot embark on celebrating a royal banquet with an epic poem, like Homer and Virgil, and wonders how he will be able to do justice to the subject. Beyond the obvious claimed sense of inferiority, the comparison between the great epic poems and the 'little' poetry of the *Silvae* (just as able to narrate similar events) can be once again referred back to Callimachus and the opening fragment of the *Aetia* in particular (Fr. 1.3-5). By alluding to the Hellenistic poet, Statius challenges his predecessors, and envisages a witty way to draw importance to his own poetic production of the *Silvae* as a legitimate medium for praising the sovereign. *Silv.* 4.2 represents a perfect example of Statius' aim to heighten a mundane occasion to the highest level of poetry, in the confined space of 67 verses.

In this sense, and in order to convey the best thanksgiving to the emperor, as elsewhere in the *Silvae* Statius appeals to the realm of the divine and myth to describe the real event. The poet takes the reader *ex abrupto* into the middle of the banquet scene (vv. 10-17):

(...) mediis videor discumbere in astris  
 cum Iove et Iliaca porrectum sumere dextra  
 immortale merum. Sterilis transmisimus annos;  
 haec aevi mihi prima dies, hic limina vitae.  
 tene ego, regnator terrarum orbisque subacti  
 magne parens, te, spes hominum, te, cura deorum,  
 cerno iacens? datur haec iuxta, datur ora tueri  
 vina inter mensasque, et non adsurgere fas est?

The divine transfiguration of the imperial banquet is confirmed by the poet's reaction (*videor*). The double meaning of the verb employed ('it seems to me', but also 'I am seen') stresses the poetic illusion to which Statius invites the reader. As a consequence, the idea of the *autopsia* is hyperbolically effective for the encomium. The environment has acquired a divine appearance: the cupbearers are identified with Ganymede (*Iliaca...dextra*), wine has turned into nectar (*immortale merum*) and the ruler is also heightened to be Jupiter *in persona* (*cum Iove*). In my view, the mundane aspect of the *convivium* is not completely absent, but transfigured onto a higher level. Besides, one should not forget the possibility that if the poem was written before the event, the lack of details (menu, reported speeches, guests) would be justified. What could be created beforehand and safely delivered at the banquet was, in fact, the imperial encomium itself.

The privilege of participating in such an event provokes incredulity and pride in the poet, who acknowledges the unusual proximity to the emperor (*tene ego...cerno iacens?*)<sup>186</sup>. The divine

<sup>186</sup>Cfr. Coleman 1988, p. 88, ad v. 14: "juxtaposition of emperor and poet emphasises the egalitarianism and informality which St. attributes to Domitian". Newlands 2002, p. 272 still casts some doubts: "Statius constructs the emperor as a god to whom he can in the special circumstances of divine beneficence come physically close (...). But physical proximity does not imply intimacy". Sic also Malamud 2007, p. 232: "Speech, whether conversation or poetic

and mundane element coexist in a paradoxical picture, where Domitian is addressed as *Jupiter in terra* with hymnic tones (*regnator terrarum; magne parens; spes hominum; cura deorum*), while at the same time he promotes a relaxed etiquette (*non adsurgere fas est?*). The coexistence of discording features in the imperial figure (the good ruler, benevolent and accessible, and the tyrant, god-like and distant) marks the innovation of Statius' encomiastic style. Once again, the idea that an authoritative power is also based on pretence is here exploited by the transfiguration of reality. The creation of a grandiose imagery of the court is the key for Statius' successful encomiastic strategy.

For its relevance in this context, the transfiguration also involves the figure of the poet. Statius does not fail to associate his own fortune with the event he is attending. The words employed describe the moment as a new birth for Statius (we could call it a 'social' rebirth) that marks the improvement of his own role as poet-client (*sterilis transmisimus annos:/haec aevi mihi prima dies, hic limina vitae*). As I will discuss later, in a very similar way, in *Silv.* 1.4, 124 f. Statius envisages Rutilius Gallicus' *soteria* through divine intervention as a new birth: *nemo modum transmissi computet aevi:/hic vitae natalis erit*. If in the case of the imperial officer the idea of a new life is literally appropriate, for Statius the *topos* acts like a rhetorical metaphor for a new beginning in his poetic career<sup>187</sup>.

The illusion of being before Jupiter in heaven allows the poet to suggest a transfiguration of the location through its *echprasis*, playing with the interchange between divine and earthly element, fiction and reality (vv. 18-26):

Tectum augustum, ingens, non centum insigne columnis,  
sed quanta superos caelumque Atlante remisso  
sustentare queant. ***Stupet hoc vicina Tonantis  
regia, teque pari laetantur sede locatum  
numina (nec magnum properes excedere caelum):***  
tanta patet moles effusaeque impetus aulae  
liberior, campi multumque amplexus operti  
aetheros, et ***tantum domino minor***; ille penates  
implet et ***ingenti genio gravat***<sup>188</sup>. (...)

The description of the banquet room is also subordinated to the encomiastic purpose, to the point that even here no spatial details are provided by the poet. The divinisation of Domitian influences the space around him, hence if the emperor is Jupiter, the room becomes the gods' place in heaven.

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performance, is entirely absent; all is left is sight; (...) the poet gazes from a distance on the emperor". By contrast, the paradox of being at the same time close and inaccessible is the key of the representation of Domitian as a *deus in terra*.

<sup>187</sup> The *topos* goes further and has also applications in political contexts. See on this Coleman 1988, p. 87 *ad v.* 12.

<sup>188</sup> With Coleman 1988, p. 91 *ad loc.* I prefer *gravat* to *iuvat* (M and Courtney 1990), as sign of the weight of god-like Domitian.



In a witty way, Statius plays again with Augustan models, and with a Virgilian verse in particular when he claims the superiority of the imperial palace to the residence of king Latinus in the *Aeneid* (7, 170 *tectum augustum, ingens, centum sublime columnis*). Throughout the poem, Domitian's divine authority is also acknowledged by the humorous presentation of the Olympic gods, described in an unusual mundane attitude. The imperial palace is hyperbolically imagined as able to sustain the vault of heaven, to the point that Atlas could be let off his duties; the informality of *Atlante remisso*<sup>189</sup> conveys a humorous touch to the presence of the god in the passage, and confirms the inversion of the roles between the earthly sovereign and the celestial gods. Moreover, the reference to Atlas carries the suggestion that the imperial palace and the imperial *persona* are assimilated to the heroic figure of Hercules. The playful representation of the gods reaches its climax with the comparison of the imperial palace to the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus. Statius registers the gods' reaction as a mixture of humbleness and delight: the amazement of Jupiter at the sight of a place that can compete with his own (*stupet hoc vicina Tonantis/regia*) and the joy of the other gods for a palace equal to heaven (*teque pari laetantur sede locatum/numina*). The choice of the verb *laetor* as the sign of approval and wish for the emperor is appropriate: often in the *Silvae* in fact words of encomium are accompanied or replaced by feelings of joy and rejoicing<sup>190</sup>. However, when these expressions are addressed by divine entities to an earthly ruler, the effect is an *adynaton*: it is the gods who rejoice for Domitian and not vice versa.

The term *aula*, used to define the imperial palace, deserves here a special mention, as it represents an example of the development of the language of power during the imperial age. As Spawforth argues, *aula* does not figure in Latin literature during the age of the Republic, but features prominently in the early years of the empire as a direct borrowing from the lexicon of Hellenistic kingship<sup>191</sup>.

The role inversion playing here between the divine and the earthly *sedes* represents a typical *topos* of imperial panegyric. However, in the Augustan age it is already widely employed in praise poetry for Augustus. Ovid applies the same formula when describing Jupiter's celestial palace (*Met.* 1, 168-174):

hac iter est superis ad magni tecta Tonantis  
regalemque domum: dextra laevaue deorum

<sup>189</sup> See Coleman 1988, p. 89 *ad loc.* and OLD, s.v. *remitto*.

<sup>190</sup> Cfr. *Silv.* 4.1, 1 *laeta...accedit purpura*; v. 5 *exsultent leges...gaudete, curules*; vv. 7-8 *Evandrius.../collis ovet*; v. 10 *curia gaudet*; vv. 25-26 *gaudent turmaeque tribusque/purpureique patres*; v. 36 *felix...Roma*. Worth a special mention is the quasi-literal reprisal of our verse in *Silv.* 4.1, 45-46 *tunc omnes stupuere dei laetoque dederunt/signa polo*. In this case the presence of a communal set of *formulae* makes me agree with Coleman on the emendation *stupuere* for *patuere* (accepted instead by Shackleton-Bailey 2003). For this philological issue see Coleman 1988, p. 81 *ad vv.* 45-46.

<sup>191</sup> Spawforth 2007, pp. 127-128.

atria nobilium valvis celebrantur apertis.  
plebs habitat diversa locis: hac parte potentes  
caelicolae clarique suos posuere penates;  
hic locus est, quem, si verbis audacia detur,  
haud timeam magni dixisse Palatia caeli.

As it emerges from the passage, the divine comparison between Jupiter and the ruler of Rome is already complete; with a common feature of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid reverses the natural equation of the metaphor and defines the gods' place in heaven the celestial version of the Roman Palatine. In other words, the earthly reign of Augustus becomes the true manifestation of power.

A combination of this motif with the '*serus in caelum redeas*' *topos* can be found in Calpurnius Siculus<sup>192</sup> (*Ecl.* 4, 137-146):

Di, precor, hunc iuvenem quem vos (neque fallor) ab ipso  
aethere misistis, post longa reducite vitae  
tempora vel potius mortale resoluite pendum  
et date perpetuo caelestia fila metallo:  
sit deus et nolit pensare palatia caelo!  
Tu quoque mutata seu Iuppiter ipse figura,  
Caesar, ades seu quis superum sub imagine falsa  
mortalique lates (es enim deus): hunc, precor, orbem,  
hos, precor, aeternus populos rege! sit tibi caeli  
vilis amor coeptamque, pater, ne desere pacem!

The poet unfolds the dynamics of the role inversion, acknowledging Nero as the earthly counterpart of Jupiter. The god-like features attributed to the emperor are combined with his earthly presence, which the poet stresses with the '*serus in caelum redeas*' motif. The paradoxical divine and human status of the imperial figure reaches new developments when the central power becomes more autocratic.

The Statian gods are also in charge of delivering the encomium. With the parenthetic expression *nec magnum properes escendere caelum* the poet performs a *variatio* of the encomiastic motif, innovating it on a lexical<sup>193</sup> and narrative level. The gods' recommendation to Domitian acquires even a humorous tone, since the emperor has in fact created heaven on earth: there is no need to rise to the sky, since the real Olympus lies on earth, and the emperor is Jupiter.

All these *topoi* return in a very similar imagery in two epigrams of Martial, possibly written for a similar occasion (8.39):

<sup>192</sup> It needs to be noted that the dating for Calpurnius Siculus may not be Neronian. See on this issue Townend 1980.

<sup>193</sup> Very effective is the use of *escendere* as a transitive verb, aimed at expressing the 'conquest' of heaven by Domitian. Cfr. *OLD*, p. 620, 1c, s. v. *escendo*. Cfr. Coleman 1988, p. 90 *ad loc.* Newlands 2002, p. 268 interprets the encomiastic *topos* in a negative light: "the price of parity with the gods is the possible invitation to join them soon".

Qui Palatinae caperet convivium mensae  
 ambrosiasque dapes, non erat ante locus:  
 hic haurire decet sacrum, Germanice, nectar  
 et Ganymede pocula mixta manu.  
 Esse velis, oro, serus conviva Tonantis:  
 at tu si properas, Iuppiter, ipse veni.

The illusion of being dining with Jupiter is played along the same *topoi*: food is replaced by ambrosia, the cupbearer is now Ganymede. As usual, Martial pushes the boundaries of the encomium even more, implying that Jupiter might join the imperial banquet in what it is in fact heaven on earth.

The poet plays with the inversion of earth in heaven in another epigram on the same topic (9.91):

Ad cenam si me diversa vocaret in astra  
 hinc invitator Caesaris, inde Iovis,  
 astra licet propius, Palatia longius essent,  
 responsa ad superos haec referenda darem:  
 'quaerite qui malit fieri conviva Tonantis:  
 me meus in terris Iuppiter, ecce, tenet.'

The implications of the superiority of Domitian to Jupiter are made clear: the physical presence of the god-like emperor on earth is unattainable for Jupiter, who is in fact perceived as distance and aloof in the sky. The actual proximity of Domitian to earth and his divine nature are combined to create an 'impossible' portrait.

The divine status of Domitian is reflected by the characteristics of his *domus*. The terms used to describe it highlight the size (*tanta patet moles; liberior*) and the height (*amplexus operti/aetheros*), but besides the specific meaning, they also represent qualities that are enhanced in the emperor's *persona* (*tantum domino minor*<sup>194</sup>). The idea of the house matching the virtues of the owner is traditional, and can be found in previous literary examples like Horace (*Epist.* 1.16), in which the poet outlines the figure of the *vir bonus* in the frame of his *villa rustica*, or in Seneca (*Epist.* 86.4 ff.), where Scipio is associated to his house and bath for the same *rusticitas* they share. Domitian's most important feature is here the physical prominence and the weight (*ille implet; gravat*) that becomes another sign of his divine nature.<sup>195</sup>

As one can see, there is no claim of reality in Statius' description of the banquet, and any claim of truthfulness would be a denial of the encomiastic purpose of the poem. Nonetheless, the

<sup>194</sup> Similar expressions can be found in the *Silvae*. See e. g. *Silv.* 2.6, 35 *et tantum domino minor*; *Silv.* 3.4, 44 *formosior ille cui daberis*; *Silv.* 5.1, 208 *maior amor*.

<sup>195</sup> See pp. 59-60. It needs to be noticed that *gravat* (v. 26) is an emendation (Schwartz).

poet does refer to the sight as the only sense to be exploited<sup>196</sup>, but the images guiding the reader do not reflect the reality witnessed by the poet, but the poetical and mythical transformation they undergo. Statius plays with the idea of *autopsia* and wittily engages with the audience (and the most prominent spectator, the emperor) in a game of excess, paradox and surrealism. In a way, Statius applies the rhetorical techniques of the Ovidian *Metamorphoses* to imperial panegyric, where the exceptionality of the scenes requires an effective poetical imagery and a constant involvement of the reader.

Finally, Statius comes to describe the *cena*, where divine and human spheres merge (vv. 30-35):

*longa supra species: fessis vix culmina prendas  
visibus auratique putes laquearia caeli.  
hic cum Romuleos procures trabeataque Caesar  
agmina mille simul iussit discumbere mensis,  
ipsa sinus accincta Ceres Bacchusque laborat  
sufficere. (...)*

The exceptional height of the ceiling makes it equal to the sky (*laquearia caeli*) and requires the poet to appeal to the readers' reliance (*putes*). If the limit between human and divine is not perceivable through the sight (*fessis...visibus*), these poetical images are introduced to liven up the scenic effect and make the encomium more spectacular. All these elements show how falsity and deception acquire here the important function of being the effective instruments for celebrating the imperial majesty.

In the convivial context where the emperor is transfigured in his divine appearance, the natural hierarchy between gods and humans is subverted as a consequence. If earlier on in the poem the cupbearer was identified with Ganymede, now it is Ceres and Bacchus to serve food and wine respectively<sup>197</sup>. The two gods are caught almost with comic effect in the act of fulfilling their role. Statius describes Ceres gathering her dress to facilitate her movements<sup>198</sup>: this action diminishes her divine status to heighten the emperor's. Both the gods are portrayed in a very earthly gesture (*laborat/sufficere*). The expression employed is not casual, but fulfils the paradoxical nature of the encomium. The effort made by Ceres and Bacchus for meeting Domitian's standards is stressed by

<sup>196</sup> Newlands 2002, p. 273 and *passim*, Malamud 2007, p. 232 and McCullough 2008-9, p. 156 see in this aspect a problematic and distant perception of the event by Statius.

<sup>197</sup> In a similar way in *Silv.* 4.1, 22 Minerva manufactures the consular toga for Domitian: *et properata tuae manus praetexta Minervae*.

<sup>198</sup> A similar gesture is performed by Minerva and Arachne during the knitting challenge in the *Metamorphoses* (6, 59-60): *utraque festinant cinctaeque ad pectora vestes/bracchia docta movent studio fallente laborem*. Here also the action is a manifestation of concentration and physical demand; for the goddess, the human and unworthy gesture stresses her manly nature.

the verb *sufficere*, positioned in *enjambement* with *laborat*. Set in the same position at the beginning of the verse and also in *enjambement*, the verb *sufficiam* of verse 8 associates the gods' role with the poet's own. The feeling is that both the actual performance at the *convivium* and the poem that celebrates it are equal in the aim of pleasing the emperor<sup>199</sup>.

Domitian's presence is felt throughout the whole poem, although he is never described in detail. The special status of the ruler requires a symbolic portraiture that underlines his divine nature and assimilation to Jupiter (vv. 38-51):

Sed mihi non epulas Indisque innixa columnis  
robora Maurorum famulasque ex ordine turmas,  
ipsum, ipsum cupido tantum spectare vacavit  
tranquillum vultu sed maiestate serena  
mulcentem radios summittentemque modeste  
fortuna vexilla suae; tamen ore nitebat  
dissimulatus honos. talem quoque barbarus hostis  
posset et ignotae conspectum agnoscere gentes.  
non aliter gelida Rhodopes in valle recumbit  
dimissis Gradivus equis; sic lubrica ponit  
membra Therapnaea resolutus gymnade Pollux,  
sic iacet ad Gangen Indis ululantibus Euan,  
sic gravis Alcides post horrida iussa reversus  
gaudebat strato latus adclinare leoni.

With an effect that is hyperbolic and flattering at the same time, in the luxurious environment of the imperial court the poet sets his eyes only on the emperor. The iteration of the pronoun (*ipsum*, *ipsum*) and the anxious wait (*spectare vacavit*) anticipate the encomiastic climax of the poem<sup>200</sup>.

The identification of Domitian with Jupiter requires the *ecphrasis* to be allusive and unrealistic, as it is appropriate when a divinity is described. The peaceful attitude that characterises the earthly *imperium* of the emperor is reflected on his divine figure, as suggested by the expression *mulcentem radios*. The verb *mulceo*, usually employed in the lexicon of weather phenomena<sup>201</sup>, contributes to the association between Jupiter and Domitian. The verb that usually carries the meaning of “to calm down, placate” with particular reference to storms, here is associated with light and the sun.<sup>202</sup> Therefore, in few lines Statius displays the most common *topoi* of praise poetry: the identification of the sovereign with the sun, the *sidus par excellence* and sign of the power of

<sup>199</sup>Cfr. Coleman 1988, p. 93 ad v. 35: “a key motif of the poem is whether the standards which Domitian deserves can be attained”.

<sup>200</sup>Newlands 2002, p. 273 reads these lines as a negative sign of lack of “relaxation or possible intimacy”.

<sup>201</sup>See e. g. Sil. 12, 4 *blandis...salubre ver zephyris tepido mulcebat rura sereno*. Cfr. OLD, p. 1140, 2c, s. v. *mulceo*; cfr. also TLL, 1562, 2a, s. v. *mulceo*.

<sup>202</sup>The identification of Jupiter with the Apollinean feature of sun and light is indeed a traditional *topos* in encomia for a ruler. See Enn., Ann. 446-447 *Iuppiter hic risit tempestasque serena/riserunt omnes risu Iovis omnipotentis*; Verg., Aen. 1, 254 (Jupiter) *subridens hominum sator atque deorum/vultu, quo caelum tempestatesque serenat*.

Jupiter. Statius imagines Domitian trying to mitigate the light he emanates: this action aims to show the extraordinary role of *Iuppiter in terra* and celestial *sidus*. But the hyperbole of the scene is achieved in the following verses, where the unconcealed imperial luminosity is still perceivable despite Domitian's attempt to keep it hidden (*tamen ore nitebat/dissimulatus honos*). The whole scene does not lack humorous tones, but Statius' intent should not be read as mockery or subversiveness. On the opposite, the playful and extreme adaptation of traditional images of praise makes the encomium unique. The emperor deserves a praise that does not apply to the normal man, and pushing the boundaries to the extreme (to the point of incredibility) becomes the characteristic sign of the imperial panegyric.

The *modestia* attributed to Domitian (*summittentemque modeste*)<sup>203</sup> corresponds to the official propaganda, but that does not find any confirmation in the portraiture of Suetonius (*Dom.*, 2.2 *simulavit et ipse mire modestiam*). As Coleman argues<sup>204</sup>, all the terms used in these verses are borrowed from the lexicon of weather phenomena: *tranquillum*, *serena*, *mulcentem*, *radios*, *nitebat*. It is the interchangeability of the epithets to favour the identification of the emperor with Jupiter, who rules over natural phenomena and often identifies with them<sup>205</sup>.

The figure of power that the emperor embodies becomes indisputable and unique, to the extent that in any part of the empire he is recognisable: *talem quoque barbarus hostes/posset et ignotae conspectum agnoscere gentes*<sup>206</sup>. This hyperbolic statement goes beyond the simple literary value, and acquires a cultural sense too. In a period when the Roman empire in fact extends its dominance over the entire *ecumene*, the figure of the emperor becomes a symbol of this supremacy and the closest one to the Olympic Jupiter. In the universe so created, the employment of a hyperbolic, 'extreme' language is what seems to fulfil at best the new reality.

If the assimilation to worthy figures is the only acceptable for the emperor, as declared by Janus in *Silv.* 4.1 (vv. 29-30), in *Silv.* 4.2 Statius quickly rejects the mythical figures of Mars, Pollux, and Bacchus (vv. 46-51), since they are not up to the level required. Therefore, the only possible assimilation is with Jupiter, as the poet makes clear in the last part of the poem (vv. 53-56):

talīs, ubi Oceani finem mensasque revisit  
Aethiopum sacro diffusus nectare vultus  
dux superum secreta iubet dare carmina Musas  
et Pallenaes Phoebum laudare triumphos.

<sup>203</sup> See Hulls 2007 for the interpretation of this *iunctura* as a sign of Domitian's military power.

<sup>204</sup> Coleman 1988, p. 96.

<sup>205</sup> See e. g. Alcaeus, Fr. 338, ἵ ύει μὲν ὁ Ζεὺς, where the verb can have both transitive (Zeus makes it to rain) and intransitive (Zeus rains).

<sup>206</sup> Worth noticing the correspondence *ignotae/agnoscere*; Newlands 2002, p. 275 interprets these verses as a sign of Domitian's military power.

It is a well-known fact that the official propaganda of Domitian relied heavily on the celebration of his military virtues and his victories over the German tribes. The identification with Jupiter plays a crucial role in this sense, because even the military triumphs ascribed to the emperor are compared to Jupiter's victory over the Giants, a mythical event often exploited in literature from Homer onwards<sup>207</sup>. The imperial banquet is in fact compared to the feast Jupiter (*dux superum*) offers to the Ethiopians, another *topos* often employed in epic literature<sup>208</sup>. The Ethiopians were traditionally considered peaceful people and respectful of Zeus' power, for which he rewarded them by offering a banquet. The reference in the *silva* aims to act as the mythological counterpart of the emperor's *clementia* and hospitality towards his subjects. The grandeur of the banquet is once again remarked by the natural presence of mythical entities, the Muses, who entertain the guests with songs never heard before, and kept secret for the occasion (*secreta...carmina*). However, as Statius makes clear in the *epistula praefatoria* of the book (vv. 29-31), being heard by the emperor is worth more than any official publication (*quanto hoc plus est quam edere!*)<sup>209</sup>. The mythical transposition of the *cena* is completed by the presence of Apollo, who sings the triumph of the Gigantomachy. This connection follows the myth, according to which Jupiter celebrated with a banquet the repression of the Giants who tried to conquer Olympus (Ovid, *Met.* 1, 151-162). The mention of the Gigantomachy carries also an important metapoetic suggestion, as the topic is also traditionally considered unsuitable for 'light' poetry. An example can in fact be found in Prop., 2.1, 39-40: *sed neque Phlegraeos Iovis Enceladique tumultus/intonet angusto pectore Callimachus*. The mention of Callimachus refers notably to the first fragment of the *Aetia* (vv.19-20 in particular) that has already been mentioned in this analysis. Once again, Statius consciously plays with his poetic models, and uses the victory of Jupiter on the Giants as a metaphor for Domitian's military successes<sup>210</sup>.

If Statius plays with the mythical references in an implicit way, Martial makes it clearer in an epigram written in occasion of the dinner offered by Domitian after the Sarmatic victory of 93 (*Epigr.* 8. 49):

Quanta Gigantei memoratur mensa triumphi  
 quantaque nox superis omnibus illa fuit,  
 qua bonus accubuit genitor cum plebe deorum  
 et licuit Faunis poscere vina Iovem:  
 tanta tuas celebrant, Caesar, convivia laurus;

<sup>207</sup> See Hardie 1986 with particular reference to cosmological themes in the *Aeneid*.

<sup>208</sup> See Homer, *Il.* 1, 423-424 and *Od.* 1, 22 ff. For other examples see Nisbet-Hubbard 1978 on Horace, *Carm.* 2. 12, 7. Malamud 2007, p. 243 sees in the Homeric precedents the model for the detached and inaccessible sovereign.

<sup>209</sup> Newlands 2002, p. 276 seems to miss this point.

<sup>210</sup> Coleman 1988, p. 99 *ad v.* 56: "The theme of the Gigantomachy is attested in both art and literature as an allegorical rendering of historical military campaigns".

The banquet becomes an occasion where divine and human levels meet, making the comparison with Jupiter even more legitimate; the emperor and the god, in fact, are not only similar for the military glory, but also for the *clementia* they share. They both invite to their dinner table gods but also lesser entities like the fauns (for Jupiter) or the subjects (for Domitian).

The encomiastic *topos* of the identification of the emperor with Jupiter, as it has been analysed, is developed fully by Statius in this poem on a real event at the imperial court. In the final verses (vv. 57-62), the poet fulfils the traditional long-life wish for Domitian<sup>211</sup>, remarking the paradoxical combination of divine honours (*templa des*) and human presence (*habites...domos*).

The final verses Statius keeps for himself, linking the present moment of happiness and success to a previous situation occurred in the past, the victory at the Alban games (vv. 63-67):

qua mihi felices epulas mensaeque dedisti  
sacra tuae, talis longo post tempore venit  
lux mihi, Troianae qualis sub collibus Albae,  
cum modo Germanas acies modo Dacca sonantem  
proelia Palladio tua me manus induit auro.

At the very end of the poem, the connection made between a past privilege received by the emperor and the present gift hints to that mechanism of *beneficia* (to give, to receive, and to reciprocate) that Seneca in *De beneficiis* recommended would last *ad libitum*<sup>212</sup>. In his position of poet-client whose only product of exchange is his own poetry, Statius embraces this logic in delivering a hyperbolic thanksgiving to the emperor, with the hope to meet the standards required and project a fruitful collaboration with the power into the future.

In my analysis of *Silv.* 4.2 I have argued that the transfiguration of the figure of the emperor is exploited as a sign of power directly from the experience of the poet at court during the imperial banquet. In the next sections, I will analyse how Statius employs a similar encomiastic strategy in a more mediated way. The presence of different direct addressees in the poems creates a sophisticated strategy in which the imperial praise is indirectly mediated through the idealisation of members of the court.

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<sup>211</sup> Also prescribed by Menander Rhetor as a conclusion of the *logos basilikos* (3. 377, 28-30 *Sp.*).

<sup>212</sup> *De Ben.* 4.3; 1.4. 4; 2.25. 3; 3.36. 2; 6.30. 5. Seneca refers to it as *contentio* or *certamen*. On these dynamics see Raccanelli 2002 and Li Causi 2008, esp. pp. 102 ff.



## b. Indirect encomium

### (i) *Silv. 3.4: Solus formosior ille cui daberis: the transfiguration of boyhood*

This poem offers a typical example of the ‘excessive’ character of panegyric in the *Silvae*. In 1984 John Garthwaite wrote on this poem (p. 124): “The consistency of its irony, the through-going subversion of the panegyric form is unequalled, I think, in any other of Statius' works.” The poem was an example of ironic poetry denigrating the imperial power, therefore contradicting the encomiastic purpose<sup>213</sup>. In reading *Silv. 3.4* I will argue that, on the contrary, the rhetoric of encomium in the *silva* defines it as an interesting example of *anathematicon*<sup>214</sup> adapted to a eulogistic destination. According to my line of enquiry, my aim is to offer an alternative reading of the poem, not ironically subversive, but witty and sophisticated. I will argue in particular that the idealisation of the figure of Earinus reflects an indirect celebration of Domitian, and represents an aesthetic canon in line with the propagandistic tendencies of the early empire.

The occasion for the composition is marked by the dedication of a lock of hair to the temple of Asclepius by Domitian's *puer delicatus*, Earinus. The event is represented as a 'mundane' act that perfectly fits the atmosphere of the court. The political relevance of this theme allows and at the same time leads Statius to present it through a mythological transfiguration. As we have seen, this rhetorical device aims to heighten the encomiastic tones and to politely avoid dealing directly with imperial politics<sup>215</sup>. The dedication of a lock of hair traditionally signified a rite of passage, and was normally accompanied (if not replaced by) the *depositio barbae* as a sign of transition from childhood to manhood. In the case of Earinus, Henriksen has convincingly argued that the *delicatus* obtained to cut his hair “to offer it to Aesculapius as a reduced version of the impossible *depositio barbae*, to be recognized as an adult, and, finally, also to receive his manumission”<sup>216</sup>. On the other hand, Juvenal also mentions this custom in *Satire 3* (v. 186 *ille metit barbam, crinem hic deponit amati*), where the ownership of exotic *pueri* represents a symbol of luxury of the imperial age. The relevance of the theme in the context of the court propaganda makes the *Silvae* the ideal space for this type of poem. Statius declares that it originated by a request made by Earinus himself, and that the composition required some time (*Praef. 3*): *Earinus praeterea, Germanici nostri libertus scit quam diu desiderium eius moratus sim, cum petisset ut capillos suos quos cum gemmata pyxide et*

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<sup>213</sup> This type of 'deconstructionist' approach is still pursued in Newlands 2002. As far as *Silv. 3.4* is concerned, her analysis (pp. 105-118) is paralled with *Silv. 1.2*, with particular attention to the encomiastic role of the *ecphrasis* of the *domus*. For the analysis of the female figure in *Silv. 1.2* see Zeiner 2007, pp. 166-176 and Rosati 1999a, pp. 158-163.

<sup>214</sup> On this see Hardie 1983, pp. 121-124.

<sup>215</sup> See Vessey 1973, p. 30: “only by such fantasy could the outré theme be approached”.

<sup>216</sup> Henriksen 1997, p. 287 and *passim* for other useful remarks on the tradition of such dedication.

*speculo ad Pergamenum Asclepium mittebat, versibus dedicarem.*

A rhetorical approach to the poem reveals the peculiarity of the portrayed relationship between Earinus and Domitian. As I will argue, the eulogy of the emperor lies in fact behind the figure of the *puer delicatus*, thus depicting Domitian as the ultimate addressee of the poem. Moreover, the transfiguration of the figure of Earinus responds here to a precise aesthetic canon of beauty and perfection connected with the imperial *persona*. A comparison with modern celebrity culture might be useful here, as the perception of Domitian and his court outside the palace is built on specific extraordinary features; encomiastic literature like the *Silvae* contributes to establish such model and divulge it.

The articulate construction of the *silva* is visible from the first lines, when the poet addresses Asclepius and asks him to accept Earinus' gift (vv. 6-11):

Accipe *laudatos*, iuvenis Phoebeie, *crines*  
quos tibi *Caesareus* donat *puer*, accipe laetus  
intonsoque ostende patri. sine dulce nitentes  
comparet atque diu fratris putet esse Lyaei.  
forsan et ipse comae numquam labentis honorem  
praemetet atque alio clusum tibi ponet in auro.

In the presentation of the official recipient of the eulogy, Earinus, the expression employed to indicate him (*Caesareus...puer*) reveals the actual figure around which the poem will be constructed, *i. e.* Domitian. Even the main object of the poem, the lock of hair, is defined as *laudatos...crines*, as if all its fortune consisted in the happy destination of its owner<sup>217</sup>.

The passage from reality to mythological fiction is marked by the motif of the 'deception of senses': Earinus' beauty raises a comparison with traditional gods famous for their *coma*, like Apollo (*intonso...patri*) and Bacchus (*fratris...Lyaei*). A topical motif of encomiastic poetry surfaces in the following lines: the beauty of the young Earinus overcomes the mythical *exempla* with which he competes. Notably the *puer*'s locks are compared to the two gods most famous for their beautiful hair (*sine dulce nitentes; comae numquam labentis*). The description of Apollo's hair as 'never falling out' could be read as a humorous hint to Domitian's baldness<sup>218</sup>, but could also refer to the enhanced vision of reality that the mythological frame allows. In other words, Earinus' introduction presents an idealised version of reality in which beauty and splendour reflects the image of the empire.

<sup>217</sup> See also Mart. 9.17, 3-4 *hos tibi laudatos domino, rata vota, capillos/ille tuus Latia misit ab urbe puer*.

<sup>218</sup> By the time of the publication of this poem Domitian was in his mid-forties, and therefore likely to have shown already signs of baldness. Cf. Suet., *Dom.*18.

The divine transfiguration of reality is conveyed through a *Priamel* (vv. 12-20):

Pergame, pinifera multum felicior Ida,  
illa licet sacrae placeat sibi nube rapinae  
**(nempe dedit superis illum quem turbida semper  
Iuno videt refugitque manum nectarque recusat),  
at tu grata deis pulchroque insignis alumno  
misisti Latio**, placida quem fronte ministrum  
Iuppiter Ausonius pariter Romanaque Iuno  
aspiciunt et **uterque probant. nec tanta potenti  
terrarum domino divum sine mente voluptas.**

The passage from the paradigmatic world of myth to the reality of the encomium is almost inconspicuous, and underlines Earinus' superiority over his mythical *alter ego*, Ganymede<sup>219</sup>. The association between the emperor's *puer delicatus* and the gods' cupbearer kidnapped by Jupiter is a recurring motif that we can trace also in Martial's *Epigrams* on the same occasion<sup>220</sup> (9.16):

Consilium formae, speculum, dulcisque capillos  
Pergameo posuit dona sacrata deo  
ille puer tota domino gratissimus aula,  
nomine qui signat tempora verna suo.  
Felix, quae tali censetur munere tellus!  
**Nec Ganymedeas mallet habere comas.**

The human appearance of Earinus is nobler and more beautiful than the divine features of Jupiter's young lover. The comparison between the two couples activates a common imagery, hence the expressions *Pergame, multum...felicior* and *Ida felix...tellus* both recall the *topos* of the emotional participation of inanimate entities (here, the city of Pergamum). We can infer then both from Statius and Martial that the superiority of Earinus over Ganymede acts as a reflection of similar dynamics occurring between Domitian and Jupiter. However, Martial seems more cautious in asserting the superiority to Ganymede (v. 6), and only alludes to the famous divine counterpart of Earinus. On the other hand, Statius is rhetorically more exaggerated. In the passage from the *Silvae* in fact, another element adds to this specific feature of Statius' encomiastic strategy. According to the myth, Ganymede is the recipient of Juno's hatred, as Statius briefly recaps in the parenthesis (*illum*

<sup>219</sup> See Pederzani 1992, p. 236 and Laguna 1992, pp. 314-315 *ad loc.*

<sup>220</sup> Other *Epigrams* dedicated to Earinus are 9.11, 12, 17. On the law against castration see 9.5 and 7. For the relationship between Earinus and Domitian in both Statius and Martial see also the good overview in Nauta 2002, pp. 246-249.

*quem turbida semper/Iuno videt refugitque manum nectarque recusat*)<sup>221</sup>. In the scenario Statius presents, Earinus on the contrary benefits from both the approval of Domitian and his wife Domitia, described through their divine counterparts (*ministrum/Iuppiter Ausonius pariter Romanaque Iuno/Aspiciunt et uterque probant*). We could say that Domitia's benevolence towards Earinus displays once more the encomiastic superiority of Domitian over his divine counterpart, since Domitia also compensates a defect of her mythological double. The approval of the imperial couple would also suggest that an openly erotic relationship between Earinus and Domitian is excluded. The encomiastic strategy finally involves also the opposition between West and East, *i. e.* between the Italic Flavian dynasty (*Ausonius; Romana*) and the Graeco-Oriental world Earinus comes from.

The model of the *puer delicatus* shares some specific features of childish beauty and erotic attraction also with other models of young boys, hence their characteristics are employed in different ways according to the context.

In my opinion, it is rather difficult to agree with Garthwaite's argument that this comparison would imply a negative analogy more than an opposition between the two figures<sup>222</sup>. As we have seen, the 'employment' of Ganymede as divine cupbearer at Jupiter's board is a consequence of an actual kidnap (v.13, *sacrae...rapinae*) and the reason why the father of the gods incurs Juno's resentment. Nonetheless, Statius' narration depicts the event from Earinus' perspective, and is therefore presented in a very different manner. The adversative conjunction *at tu* (v. 16) introduces the peculiar role of Pergamum: the divine favour it can claim for being the birthplace of Earinus (*grata deis pulchroque insigni alumno*), and its independence in making personal decisions (*misisti*). The perception the reader gets is of a characterization of Pergamum as opposed to Ida, whose only action is to rejoice for Earinus' divine destination (v. 13, *placeat sibi*). The benevolence of the heavenly world is alluded to again at the end of the passage, when earthly power and divine protection are perfectly harmonized (*nec tanta potenti/terrarum domino divum sine mente voluptas*). The traditional association with a divine model is eventually overturned, and shows once again an effective application of the encomiastic strategy<sup>223</sup>.

From the frame of the imperial court, the narration is brought back to the world of myth with

<sup>221</sup> For the use of parentheses in the *Silvae* see Coleman 2010 and on this one see in particular pp. 311-312. For the traditional hostility of Juno for Ganymedes see Ovid, *Met.* 10, 155-161 and Verg., *Aen.* 1, 28.

<sup>222</sup> Garthwaite 1984, p. 114. Already Pederzani 1992, pp. 239 ff. noted the inconsistency of this position.

<sup>223</sup> Newlands 2002, p. 107 analyses the passage only in terms of the analogy and the negative impressions that come with it: "Earinus is set within an imaginative environment that endows him with legendary status -but it is the strictly subordinate status of Jupiter's Ganymede. Earinus' divinisation suggests his superlative value within the economic and social system of the imperial court. Yet the oxymoron 'sacred rapine' also hints at his ambiguous status as a highly precious object of exchange in the commercial transaction between East and West."

a hint of epic tones. The very moment at which Venus notices the figure of Earinus is described by Statius as a divine epiphany (vv. 26-30):

*Hic puerum egregiae praeclarum sidere formae  
ipsius ante dei ludentem conspicit aras.  
Ac primum subita paulum decepta figura  
natorum de plebe putat; sed non erat illi  
arcus et ex umeris nullae fulgentibus umbrae.*

Venus is described as being initially confused (*ac primum subita paulum decepta figura*), with *subita* indicating the sudden apparition of Earinus and is appropriately marked by the following caesura. The goddess is almost blinded at the sight of the boy and his shining beauty (*umeris...fulgentibus*), to the point that she mistakes him for one of her children (*natorum de plebe putat*). However, if one reads *non* as also referred to *nullae umbrae* (i.e. 'there was a shadow'), the implication that Earinus is in fact mortal becomes more obvious. The final acknowledgement of his identity still does not prevent Venus from looking at him with admiration (*miratur puerile decus, vultumque comasque/aspiciens*). Once again, the narrative structure enhances the rhetorical purpose of the verse, hence the repetition of the enclitic *-que*<sup>224</sup> (*vultumque comasque*) pictures Venus' amazed contemplation of Earinus.

The goddess' attitude closely resembles the similar reaction Curtius has in the moment he sees the equestrian statue of Domitian (*Silv.* 1.1, 71-73), stressing in both case the luminosity coming from the object of the eulogy. As well as this, in both poems the image is introduced by the same expression *ac primum*. The application of the same 'strategy of deceit' of Ovidian memory can be noticed: Earinus is mistaken for a relevant mythical *alter ego* (Cupidus) and eventually portrayed as an 'improved version' of the latter, in this case for missing the wings that could overshadow his luminosity (*ex umeris nullae fulgentibus umbrae*)<sup>225</sup>. The theme of the light strengthens the idea that Earinus reflects a traditional *topos* of encomium that is also applied to Domitian. A further confirmation of the 'reflective' function of the young boy can be found when Venus fashions him for going to the court of Domitian (vv. 50-56):

tunc propior iam cura deae, quae forma capillis  
optima, quae vestis roseos *accendere* vultus

<sup>224</sup> The enclitic *-que*, as it is well known, was introduced in Latin by Ennius directly from Homer. The style of the 'double-*que*' especially at the end of the hexameter is typical in epic poetry. We can find an interesting example of a triple iteration of the *-que* followed also by an *et* in Ovid, *Met.* 1, 500-501 (Apollo) *laudat digitosque manusque/bracchiaque et nudos media plus parte lacertos*. The polysyndeton conveys the suggestion that Daphne's beauties are infinite.

<sup>225</sup> See Laguna 1992, p. 319 *ad* vv. 26-30 for some examples of the technique of confusing a mortal with a god.

apta, quod in digitis, collo quod dignius **aurum**.  
**norat caelestis oculos ducis** ipsaque taedas  
iunxerat et plena dederat conubia dextra.  
sic ornat crines, Tyrios sic fundit amictus,  
**dat radios ignemque suum**. (...)

The vocabulary employed by Statius underlines the luminosity of Earinus, which Venus explicitly enhances to match a feature of the imperial figure (*norat caelestis oculos ducis*). Moreover, the image of the goddess adjusting the purple cloak around Earinus is reminiscent of Minerva making Domitian's purple consular toga in *Silv.* 4.1, 21-22: (...) *hos umeros multo sinus ambiat ostro/et properata tuae minibus praetexta Minervae*. An attribute that for Earinus is only an aesthetic detail acquires a deeper meaning when compared to a specific public representation of Domitian, thus reinforcing the idea that the young boy acts as a reflection of the imperial power.

The whole section, as I have previously mentioned, is rich with epic suggestions, that heighten what would otherwise be a normal act of dedication<sup>226</sup>. The theme of the *sidus* recurring in the *silva* (vv. 8, 26, 30, 65, 87) plays in this context an important intertextual role, since it connects the representation of Earinus with other *pueri* from Statian epic works, like Parthenopaeus and Achilles<sup>227</sup>. Sometimes we can see a common set of expressions in use, e.g. in the description of Parthenopaeus' beauty (*Theb.* 4, 252 *vultus et egregiae tanta indulgentia formae*)<sup>228</sup>.

The epic tones continue in the following lines when Venus finally addresses the young boy (vv. 31-44):

**miratur puerile decus, vultumque comasque**  
aspiciens 'tunc Ausonias' ait 'ibis ad arces,  
neglectus Veneri? tu sordida tecta **iugumque**  
**servitii** vulgare feres? procul absit: **ego isti**  
**quem meruit formae dominum dabo**. vade age mecum,  
vade, puer: ducam volucris per sidera curru  
**donum immane duci**; nec te plebeia manebunt  
iura: **Palatino famulus deberis amori**.  
nil ego, nil, fateor, toto tam dulce sub orbe  
aut vidi aut genui. cedit tibi Latmius ultro

<sup>226</sup> Pederzani 1992, p. 244 sums it perfectly: "(the epic language) mira a nobilitare la storia di un personaggio e di un gesto di dedica assolutamente 'quotidiani'".

<sup>227</sup> For Parthenopaeus see *Theb.* 4, 246-275; 6, 550-645; 9, 701; see also *Silv.* 5.2, 122, where Parthenopaeus is mentioned as a model for Crispinus. For Achilles see *Achill.* 1, 162; 182; 328; 368 f., 771. The parallel also recalls the figure of Ophelte: *Theb.* 4, 786 ff. *puer...in vultum nitens*. See also La Penna 2000, pp. 135-168 for an interesting review of the ephebic models in Flavian literature.

<sup>228</sup> But see also *Silv.* 1.2, 107 f. *formae/egregium mirata decus* (Violentilla). The same *iunctura* defines Aeneas' appearance in *Aen.* 4, 150 *Aeneas, tantum egregio decus enitet ore* and Turnus', *Aen.* 7, 473 *hunc decus egregium formae movet atque iuventae*. See also EV, 2, p. 10, s. v. *decus* and OLD, p. 495, 5, s. v. *decus*.

Sangariusque puer, quemque irrita fontis imago  
et sterilis consumpsit amor. te caerula Nais  
mallet et adpressa traxisset fortius urna.  
tu puer ante omnis; *solus formosior ille cui daberis.*<sup>229</sup>

The solemnity of Venus' speech confers epic tones and mythical echoes to the narration of Earinus' arrival to Rome<sup>229</sup>. The goddess who usually represents the erotic *voluptas*, here expresses also the *voluptas divum* that at v. 20 suggested the divine benevolence for Domitian.

The relationship between the emperor and Earinus does not exclude borrowings from the love language of elegy to express the role of the boy as a real *servitium amoris*. In fact Statius describes his position as a *iugum servitii* (33-34) to be held for a *dominus* (35). In such a context where beauty, love, and aesthetics rule, Venus seems to be the more appropriate spokesperson to deliver the eulogy for Earinus (and indirectly for Domitian). It is still her role in the fiction of the poem to bring the boy from Pergamum to Rome, hence being the ultimate orchestrator of the *servitium*.

The encomium of Earinus is entirely conducted in the frame of the relationship with Domitian, therefore creating a reflection of the emperor himself: the boy's beauty is reflected only in the person who appreciates it (v. 35, *ego isti/quem meruit formae dominum dabo*). The eulogy delivered by Venus eventually includes the emperor himself and confirms once again the inversion of the roles between gods and humans.

A new *Priamel* illustrates a new parallel for Earinus, this time with some mythical *exempla* of topical beauty, incidentally all victims of unrequited love: Endymion, Attis, Narcissus and Hylas. The mention of Attis and Narcissus is particularly relevant for the themes of castration<sup>230</sup> and the mirror, which features among the gifts donated to Asclepius by Earinus. Opposite to the Ovidian boy, consumed by an *irrita imago* and a *sterilis amor*, Earinus can rely on the emperor's affection, in whose *persona* an even greater beauty is mirrored (*solus formosior ille cui daberis*). Thus, the character of the young lover appears to be reflecting virtues that all belong to Domitian.

The theme of the lock of hair and the presence of Venus recall two texts in particular, the *Coma Berenices* of Callimachus (a classic of encomiastic poetry, as we have already seen in the present work) and its Latin reprise of Catullus' poem 66<sup>231</sup>. In both texts the dedication of the lock

<sup>229</sup> See e. g. Verg., *Aen.* 4, 234 *Romanas...arces*. It is worth noticing for vv. 35-36 in particular the Virgilian echoes of *Aen.* 2, 289, where Hector appears in a dream to Aeneas: *'heu fuge, nate dea, teque his' ait 'eripe flammis'*. See also *Aen.* 3, 103 in which Anchises urges his fellows: *'audite, o proceres', ait 'et spes discite vestras'*. At v. 36 the *iunctura volucris...curru* is an interesting literary reprise of the metaphor describing Turnus' chariot: *Aen.* 10, 440 *Turnus, qui volucris curru medium secat agmen*.

<sup>230</sup> Vout 2007, pp. 195 ff. analyses the influence of the *Carmen* 63 of Catullus in modelling Earinus.

<sup>231</sup> The reference to the models is mentioned also by Newlands 2002, pp. 106-107 and Vout 2007, p. 193.

of hair represents a votive offering made by the queen Berenice to propitiate the return of her husband Ptolemy from the war (Catul. 66, 11-12). Once again, Venus is the assumed perpetrator in the miraculous assumption of the gift amongst the celestial bodies, thus creating a new constellation:

ὔδασι λουόμενόν με παρ' ἀθανάτους ἀνιόντα  
Κύπρις ἐν ἀρχαίοις ἄστρον ἔθηκε νέον.

(Call., *Aet.* Fr. 110 Pf. 63-64)

uvidulam a fluctu cedentem ad templa deum me  
sidus in antiquis diva novum posuit (*scil.* Venus)

(Catul., 66, 63-64)

However, both in Callimachus and Catullus, the catasterism of the queen's lock is perceived with sadness and abandonment<sup>232</sup>:

οὐ τάδε μοι τοσσήνδε φέρει χάριν ὅσσον ἐκείνης  
ἀσχάλλω κορυφῆς οὐκέτι θιζόμενος,  
ἦς ἄπο, παρθενίη μὲν ὅτ' ἦν ἔτι, πολλὰ πέπωκα  
λιτά, γυναικείων δ' οὐκ ἀπέλαυσα μύρων.

(Call., *Aet.* Fr. 110 Pf. 75-78)

invita, o regina, tuo de vertice cessi,  
invita: adiuro teque tuumque caput

(Catul., 66, 39-40)

Even though it shares the same encomiastic aim, the *silva* displays quite a different situation. The dedication of the lock of hair is an act of thanksgiving to Asclepius for having granted to Earinus eternal youth. The presence of Venus is a crucial constant element, being the actual architect of the catasterism: in Callimachus and Catullus it unfolds into the aetiology of a new constellation, the result of the assumption to the sky of Berenice's *coma*. The scenario of the *silva* instead seems to offer a developed version, with Earinus on Venus' chariot joining the celestial gods. Nonetheless a similar gesture acquires in Statius a new direction, since the real 'gods' are no more located in heaven, but in an entirely earthly location, Rome (vv. 47-49):

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<sup>232</sup> Fantuzzi-Hunter 2004, p. 88 though cleverly argue that in both poets the lock is balanced between self-deprecation and arrogance, representing the an interesting 'double' of the poet himself: "in its patent insecurity, the voluble lock, by turns proudly arrogant and transparently self-pitying, functions as a humorous analogy to the voice of the encomiastic poet, always overrating his own importance while being only too painfully aware of just how dispensable he is."



(...) iam Latii montes veterisque penates  
Evandri, quos mole nova pater inclitus orbis  
excolit et *summis aequat Germanicus astris*.

The celestial Olympus is now the Palatine, where Domitian acts as Jupiter being the ideal link between earth and sky. The parting from Pergamum is free from the melancholic tones found in Callimachus and Catullus: on the contrary the arrival of Earinus in Rome is the greatest privilege the boy can aspire to (vv. 60-64):

*Care puer superis*, qui praelibare verendum  
nectar et ingentem totiens contingere dextram  
*electus* quam nosse Getae, quam tangere Persae  
Armenique Indique petunt! *o sidere dextro*  
*edite, multa tibi divum indulgentia favit*.

The relationship between the emperor and his *puer delicatus* is now openly built as an inversion of the premises: it is not only Domitian who enjoys the company of a better-looking cup-bearer than Ganymedes, but Earinus also has the fortune to serve nectar (and not wine) at the imperial *mensa*<sup>233</sup>. Such a privileged position is summed by the key-word *electus*, which might also carry erotic suggestions. The privilege Earinus has to be the first to taste the nectar from Domitian's glass (*praelibare*) is in fact a common gesture in erotic poetry (*Silv.* 2.1, 60; *Ov., Am.* 1.4, 31; *Ars* 1, 575 f. are only few examples), and underlines the privileged position of the young boy. As we have seen in *Silv.* 4.2, the transfiguration of reality becomes the key for the success of Statius' encomiastic strategy.

There is also another element of the imperial propaganda that cannot be neglected here: the allusion to Domitian's military power. The 'elegiac' scenario presented so far is followed by the mention of the *ingens...dextra*, as to counterbalance the image of the emperor. In the transfigured reality of the encomium, as in an oxymoron the enemies long for meeting (*nosse*) or touching (*contingere*) the power of Rome<sup>234</sup>. More than that, the gesture of 'touching the right hand' is a symbol of submission and mercy, thus creating a paradoxical situation in which the enemies rejoice at the idea of being conquered by Rome. Again, the same gesture acquires a different meaning when applied to Earinus, for whom 'touching the right hand' has an erotic implication of intimacy with Domitian that goes back to elegiac models (*e. g.* *Prop.* 2.1, 45 and *Ov., Am.* 1. 8, 96).

A similar role inversion is not unknown to previous encomiastic literature, but it also occurs for example in Callimachus' *Hymn to Delos*. The poem is built around the analogy between Apollo

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<sup>233</sup> See Vessey 1973, p. 34.

<sup>234</sup> It is the same idea expressed in *Silv.* 4.1, 40 ff.

and Ptolemy II Philadelphus, from their birth to the settlement into their respective duties<sup>235</sup>. In this context, I will report the passage in which the god, addressing his mother, refuses to be born in the place that will be conquered by the soon-to-be sovereign (*Hymn.* 4, 165-170):

ἀλλά οἱ ἐκ Μοιρέων τις ὀφειλόμενος θεὸς ἄλλος  
ἐστί, Σαωτήρων ὕπατον γένος· ὃ ὑπὸ μήτρην  
ἵζεται οὐκ ἀέκουσα Μακηδόνι κοιρανέεσθαι  
ἀμφοτέρη μεσόγεια καὶ αἱ πελάγεςσι κάθηνται,  
μέχρις ὅπου περάτη τε καὶ ὀππόθεν ὠκέες ἵπποι  
ἡέλιον φορέουσιν (...)

The spontaneous submission of the conquered people represents an effective encomiastic *topos* that finds its origins in the Ptolemaic political propaganda. In the comparison drawn so far between Callimachus and Catullus on the one hand and Statius on the other, a noteworthy element surfaces when comparing the occasion for the composition. In both the poems on Berenice, the war is the ultimate reason why the queen decides to dedicate the lock of hair as a guarantee of the safe return of her husband from the military campaign (Catul. 66, 11-12). In other words, both poets condemn the war when it aims at conquest, while in Statius war is not approved, but reconsidered in terms of a benevolent imperialism.

The affinity with the two precedents then seems to be limited to the dedication of the lock, yet with different implications. In Callimachus and Catullus, Berenice's gesture effectively serves an aetiological purpose, whereas in Statius a similar act acquires a new meaning, as suggested by the expression *multa tibi divum indulgentia*<sup>236</sup> *favit*. The 'divine favour' granted to Earinus leads us towards the climax of the imperial encomium: the castration performed by Asclepius on him is transfigured into a generous concession of eternal youth<sup>237</sup> (vv. 65-71):

olim etiam, ne prima genas lanugo nitentes  
carperet et pulchrae fuscaret gratia formae,  
ipse deus patriae celsam trans aequora liquit  
Pergamon. haud ulli puerum mollire potestas

<sup>235</sup> For the analysis of the poem in the context of the *Silvae* see Coleman 1999, pp. 74-76; for a more specific approach see Pretagostini 2007.

<sup>236</sup> Lotito 1974, p. 325, n. 77 argues that “in Stazio *indulgentia* e *indulgere* sono sempre usati allorchè l'imperatore proceda a promozioni di funzionari”. We can deduce then that Earinus has achieved the top of the 'career' he can aspire to. See also OLD, p. 888, s. v. *indulgentia* and *indulgeo*.

<sup>237</sup> Provocative as usual the interpretation of the fact given by Garthwaite 1984, pp. 123-124, who states that Earinus, praying Asclepius for granting to Domitian an eternal youth might imply the possibility that the emperor undergo the same drastic solution that let the boy preserve his beauty, i. e. castration. For some historical notes on the practise of castration of young slaves see Henriksen 1997. Adamantius, *Phys.* 2.3 notes the difference between eunuchs from birth and 'man-made' ones. The practise of castrating young boys for sexual purposes in the early imperial age is recorded by Seneca, *De ira*, 1.21 *libido...puerorum greges castrat*.

credita, sed tacita iuvenis Phoebeius arte  
leniter haud ullo concussum vulnere corpus  
de sexu transire iubet. (...)

The dedication of the lock of hair figures as an act of gratitude to Asclepius for something that is, in reality, completely unnatural. How should one explain the legitimation of such a violation? The key for interpreting the text is to be found in the 'reflecting' function Statius confers upon Earinus. The preservation of his young appearance also includes his luminosity, that the growth of the beard would cover (*prima genas lanugo nitentes/carperet*); given his special status, the shining beauty of the *puer* reflects also upon Domitian.

Given this poetic and transformed scenario, Statius cannot avoid mentioning the historical background upon which the *silva* is based, the edict against male castration approved by Domitian<sup>238</sup>(vv.73-77):

nondum pulchra ducis clementia coeperat ortu  
intactos servare mares; nunc frangere sexum  
atque *hominem mutare nefas*, gavisaeque solos  
quos genuit natura videt, nec *lege sinistra*  
ferre timent famulae natorum pondera matres.

The evident contradiction with Earinus' destiny is resolved in the exceptionality of his role as the idealizing mirror of Domitian, thus his existence is imagined only in the divine universe in which the emperor rules<sup>239</sup>. As the law on castration cannot be applied retrospectively (*nondum*), the problematic condition of Earinus is converted into a positive image. In this way, Statius also operates a revaluation of eunuchs, usually “mocked and regarded as objects of derision and disgust”<sup>240</sup>. The position of power in which Earinus is put shows the potential of the encomium as a medium to interpret reality, even when the spokesperson is a passive figure like a eunuch. Besides, the figure of Earinus is modelled on an aesthetic canon that can also be found in representations of young ephebes (therefore not *delicati*) during the Flavian age<sup>241</sup>. Therefore, the complex *persona* of

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<sup>238</sup> On which see also Mart. 9.5 and 7. Ammianus Marcellinus also mentions the edict 18.4.5 *horum et similium taedio iuvat veterem laudare Domitianum, qui licet patris fratrisque dissimilis, memoriam nominis sui inexpressibili detestatione perfudit, tamen receptissima inclaruit lege, qua minaciter interdixerat ne intra terminos iuris dictionis Romanae castraret quisquam puerum; quod ni contigisset, quis eorum ferret examina, quorum raritas difficile toleratur?*

<sup>239</sup> Pederzani 1992, p. 251 is worth mentioning for the comparison of Earinus with a scene from Petronius, chaps. 108-109, depicting Eumolpus, Giton and Encolpius while their hair is being shaved. The scholar argues that “in virtù del rapporto antifrastico tra questi due testi, potremmo dire perciò (...) che l’opera di Petronio costituisce insieme a quella encomiastica di Stazio, un ambiguo specchio a due facce della realtà imperiale romana, riflessa comunque in maniera distorta, anche se idealizzante in un caso, deformante dall’altro.”

<sup>240</sup> Vout 2007, p. 198.

<sup>241</sup> For this see *infra*, chapt. 3a.

Earinus cannot just be dismissed as “emperor’s favourite and slave, object of erotic desire and castrated male”<sup>242</sup>. The focus of Statius on the young boy as a symbol of the imperial propaganda exemplifies the progressive aestheticisation of the image of power. The common lexicon in descriptions of ephebes from different genres (like the figures of Parthenopaeus and Achilles in the epic works of Statius) offers a mixed model of virility and childish beauty<sup>243</sup>. Earinus can be rightly included in this category of *pueri*, but his condition of eunuch and *deliciae* of the emperor makes his status rather exceptional, since he lacks the signs of incipient virility that are typical of the young epic ephebes. Compared to his epic counterparts, Earinus does not show signs of inadequacy for his role, and his luxurious appearance is praised as perfectly suited to his function at the court (vv. 33-34 ...*ego isti/quem meruit, formae dominum dabo*; vv. 37-38 ...*nec te plebeian manebunt/iura: Palatino famulus deberis amori*). Earinus’ *virtus* is completely identified with his beauty, and no mention is made of his moral character or of his precocious maturity<sup>244</sup>. The attention Venus pays to the embellishment of the *puer* with precious ornaments and clothes (vv. 50-52 and 55-56) responds to the need of pleasing Domitian’s eyes (v. 53 *norat caelestis oculos ducis*) and matching his imperial *persona*. The imagery of gold and radiant beauty that Earinus shares with other models of *pueri*<sup>245</sup> differs from the absence of weapons. Notably, in epic contexts, objects like swords, shields and armours represent the glamorous fashion of the young warriors, and often reveal their unsuitability for war, as in the case of Parthenopaeus in *Theb.* 4, 265 *igneus ante omnes auro micat*)<sup>246</sup>.

In the last section of the *silva*, one of Venus’ children encloses a mirror with the gifts to be dedicated in Asclepius’ temple (vv. 93-98):

tunc puer e turba, manibus qui forte supinis  
nobile gemmato speculum portaverat auro,  
‘hoc quoque demus’ ait; ‘patriis nec gratius ullum  
munus erit templis, ***ipsoque potentius auro,***  
***tu modo fige aciem et vultus hic usque relinque.***  
***sic ait et speculum reclusit imagine rapta.***

In the case of Earinus, war objects are replaced by a mirror, appropriately fashioned in gold (*gemmato speculum...auro*). The gift donated to Asclepius confirms the ‘reflective’ role of the *delicatus*. Moreover, the mirror is defined by one of the cupids as *potentius auro*, thus suggesting

<sup>242</sup> Newlands 2002, p. 113.

<sup>243</sup> For the analysis of this common descriptions see La Penna 2000, pp. 135-168; for details on the specific imagery of colours and luxury materials in the depiction of the *pueri* see Sanna 2004.

<sup>244</sup> This represents another common *topos* in the description of *pueri*. Cfr. La Penna 2000, *ibidem*.

<sup>245</sup> Sanna 2004 reports many occurrences in Flavian epic poems and in the *Silvae*.

<sup>246</sup> For this and other examples cf. Sanna 2004.

the interesting thought that the effeminate, non-belligerent Earinus surpasses his epic counterparts. The invitation to leave his own image imprinted in the mirror, as a photograph *avant la lettre*, consecrates the *puer delicatus* as the ideal *alter ego* of Domitian. Moreover, with the use of the term *usque* the eternal beauty of the boy acts as a guarantee of equal eternal youth to the emperor.

The final eulogy, pronounced by Earinus himself to Asclepius, openly reveals the encomiastic strategy that has defined the whole poem (vv. 99-106):

At puer egregius tendens ad sidera palmas<sup>247</sup>  
 ‘his mihi pro donis, hominum mitissime custos,  
 si merui, **longa dominum renovare iuventa**  
 atque orbi servare velis. hoc sidera mecum,  
 hoc undae terraeque rogant. eat, oro, per annos  
 Iliacos Pyliosque simul, propriosque penates  
 gaudeat et secum Tarpeia senescere templa.’  
 sic ait, et motas miratur Pergamos aras.

With *at* positioned at the beginning of the verse, Earinus reverses his special status into a wish for Domitian to outlive the years of life of Priam, King of Troy (*annos Iliacos*) and of Nestor, King of Pylos (*Pyliosque*)<sup>248</sup>, both sovereigns known for their wisdom, experience and most notably, longevity. The young boy also prays that the emperor can grow old together with his temples, the necessary witnesses of the imperial greatness through the centuries to come after his death. With this allusion, Earinus casts a light of eternity on Domitian's future, and transfers the gift of long life to Domitian. With this final twist, the ‘reflective’ role of Earinus defines him as the ideal petitioner, thus reversing his own extraordinary status into an encomiastic motif for Domitian.

In this section I have argued that the *puer* acts as a spokesperson and symbol of the imperial power. The encomiastic strategy employed by Statius leads to a successful revaluation of the problematic status of Earinus, and elevates him to be an emblematic symbol of the complex reality of the court of Domitian.

The idealisation of Earinus contributes to the celebration of a specific image of the emperor and his power, balanced between *auctoritas*, benevolence, and aesthetical appearance. In the next section I will analyse how the transfiguration of other members of the court of Domitian can be interpreted as a successful strategy of encomium of the addressees and indirectly of the imperial power.

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<sup>247</sup> Noteworthy is the use of the same expression in Virgil, *Aen.* 1, 94: (Aeneas) *ingemit et duplicis tendens ad sidera palmas*.

<sup>248</sup> Nestor is mentioned as an example of longevity in the encomium for Domitian pronounced by the Sibyl in *Silv.* 4.3, 150.

(ii) *Silv. 1.4: Es caelo, dis Germanice cordi: the transfiguration of manhood*

Following our examination of Statius' encomiastic strategies applied to imperial panegyric, the next section will be focused on another figure gravitating around Domitian. If in *Silv. 3.4* the representation of Egrinus pursued an idealised, aesthetic canon of the eternal perfection of the imperial power, in *Silv. 1.4* the idealisation of an imperial officer explores other aspects of the praise for Domitian, such as devotion and military authority. I will also discuss how Statius himself features in the dynamics portrayed in the poem, and the strategy he employs to establish a connection with his friend and dedicatee.

The composition is dedicated to one of Domitian's officers, Rutilius Gallicus, in occasion of his recovery from an illness. As we have said, indirect references to the figure of the emperor feature in the compositions analysed in this section, hence in *Silv. 1.4* the encomium of Rutilius Gallicus is built on the existing relationship with the emperor, and the extraordinary social relevance connected to it<sup>249</sup>.

The poetic occasion is introduced by the prefatory letter at the beginning of book 1: *sequitur libellus Rutilio Gallico convalescenti dedicatus, de quo nihil dico, ne videar defuncti testis occasione mentiri* (27 ff.). In 1974 Peter White explained Statius' decision to publish the poem even though Gallicus was dead, arguing that "the poet simply gathered and published whatever he had in hand, without seeking further to please the subject of the poems"<sup>250</sup>. More recently, scholars have identified in Domitian an indirect addressee of the poem: "jemandem wie Gallicus, der vom Kaiser wie kaum ein zweiter durch Machtbefugnisse ausgezeichnet ist, ein Gedicht zu widmen bedeutet beinahe, es dem Kaiser selbst zu widmen."<sup>251</sup> Therefore, the poem focuses on the recovery of Rutilius Gallicus as the occasion for the composition, but ultimately works within the poetic strategy for the imperial encomium.

In order to fulfil this aim, Statius establishes a strong interdependence between Gallicus' and Domitian's destiny; in this scenario, the recovery of an imperial officer is to be read as a favour the gods have granted to the sovereign (vv. 1-6):

*Estis, io, superi, nec inexorabile Clotho  
volvit opus. videt alma pios Astraea Iovique  
conciliata redit, dubitataque sidera cernit  
Gallicus. es caelo, dis es Germanice cordi*

<sup>249</sup> Henderson 1998 is useful especially for the analysis of the epigraphical evidence to reconstruct the life and career of Rutilius Gallicus.

<sup>250</sup> White 1974, p. 48.

<sup>251</sup> Rühl 2006, p. 347.

(quis neget?): *erubuit tanto spoliare ministro  
imperium Fortuna tuum.* (...)

These verses seem to suggest even more: the protection the gods have granted to Gallicus is interpreted as a proof of their existence, and his survival is necessary in the frame of the imperial court. The recovery acts as an evidence of the divine nature of the emperor and therefore also of the extraordinary relationship he establishes with the celestial gods. Martial also marks this connection (*Ep.* 2.91, 1-2): *rerum certa salus...Caesar/sospite quo magnos credimus esse deos*. Gallicus' recovery becomes in fact a new rebirth [v. 8 (...) *alios melior revirescit in annos*] that is reflected upon poetry itself (v. 22 *vires...novas*)<sup>252</sup>. Nevertheless, Gallicus' position in the imperial administration is not neglected by the poet. The jurisdictional role he holds (vv. 10-12) grants him the favour of the goddess Justice, who acts for his recovery and reconciles with the other celestial gods (*videt pios Astraea Iovique/conciliate redit*). The ideological connection between the emperor and his officer is clearly displayed: in order to benefit from the imperial protection, Gallicus must show a high moral profile and be able to take great responsibilities<sup>253</sup>.

In a system ruled by hierarchy and order, the poet finds his place as a *praeconium*, a mediator whose role is to 'negotiate' power relationships. In this scenario, Statius' aim is to associate his own *persona* to the addressee's, being either the emperor or a patron. As I will demonstrate, the *patronus-cliens* relationship in this poem (as elsewhere in the *Silvae*) is built on different stylistic registers, with borrowings from other literary genres like elegy and, in a broader sense, from love language. The purpose of this encomiastic strategy is to reinforce the intimacy between the poet and the addressee by creating an idealised sense of equality.

Statius' aim to associate his position to the *laudandus* is already manifested in the first part of the poem with a *recusatio* (vv. 19-23):

Ast ego nec Phoebum, quamquam mihi surda sine illo  
plectra, nec Aonias decima cum Pallade divas  
aut mitem Tegeae Dircesve hortabor alumnum;  
*ipse veni viresque novas animumque ministra  
qui caneris;* (...)

The dismissal of the traditional divinities connected with poetical activity is replaced with a direct

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<sup>252</sup> Hardie 1983 reads the *silva* as a celebration of a new age. Cfr. p. 196: "the survival is then brought into association with the *novum saeculum* (for which hints of a new Golden age of justice have prepared the reader). Gallicus' recovery is evidence that the *novum saeculum* is a reality (...)"

<sup>253</sup> According to Henderson 1998, p. 19, Gallicus' career culminated under Domitian with the *praefectura Urbi*.

appeal to the addressee, who ideally substitutes for the god as the new source of inspiration<sup>254</sup>. As in imperial *encomia*, it is the emperor who inspires the poet as a new Muse, here the same role is played by Gallicus<sup>255</sup>. In the frame of the imperial encomium, the invocation to the emperor plays the fundamental role of establishing the divine nature of his power. When this *topos* of the imperial panegyric is employed in the praise of other figures, Statius declares an actual inclination of the addressee for literary activities as a guarantee of poetical authority<sup>256</sup> (vv. 27-30; 34-37):

(...) largos potius mihi gurgis in haustus  
qui rapitur de fonte tuo, seu plana solutis  
quom struis orsa modis seu quom tibi dulcis in artem  
frangitur et nostras curat facundia leges.

(...) nec tu (quando tibi, Gallice, maius  
eloquium fandique opibus sublimis abundas)  
sperne coli tenuiore lyra. vaga cingitur astris  
luna, et in Oceanum rivi cecidere minores.

The traditional Callimachean fount from which the purest poetry springs is here identified by Statius with Gallicus himself<sup>257</sup>. In this context, one is likely to make a broader association with the figure of Domitian as *patronus* of arts<sup>258</sup>. The connection with Apollo and the emperor leads also to the comparison between the *laudandus* and the moon (*vaga cingitur astris/luna*), which represents one the most characteristic *topoi* in the encomiastic tradition<sup>259</sup>. If the imagery is well-known, the application is unusual: it is not a sovereign to be compared to a celestial body, but an officer and orator of the empire. The metaphors adopted in this passage reveal Statius' intent to associate his own poetry with the literary activity of Rutilius Gallicus. The

<sup>254</sup> This rhetorical practice is known since the Augustan poets who employed it in the first place. Cfr. e.g. Virgil to Maecenas in *Georg.* 3, 42 *te sine nil altum mens incohat*; Tibullus to Messalla in 2.1, 35 *huc ades adspiraque mihi*. For imperial *encomia* cfr. e.g. Ovid, *Fast.* 1, 3-6 *excipe pacato, Caesar Germanice, voltu/hoc opus et timidae derige navis iter/officioque, levem non aversatus honorem/en tibi devoto numine dexter ades*. In the *Silvae* Domitian is invoked with Apollo in *Silv.* 5.1, 13-15. See also Nauta 2008, p. 151. A more complete discussion of the role of the Muses in Statius and Flavian poetry in Rosati 2002a.

<sup>255</sup> Cfr. Rosati 2002, p. 246 for a comparison between the portrait of Gallicus in these verses and the figure of Juno in *Aen.* 9, 764 *luno viris animumque ministrat*. For the theme of *recusatio* in Flavian poetry cfr. Nauta 2006.

<sup>256</sup> Another example can be found in *Silv.* 4.7, 21-24.

<sup>257</sup> It is worth noticing that Gallicus' *gurgis* strikingly recalls the *puro gurgite* Voltumnus has become in *Silv.* 4.3, 94.

<sup>258</sup> On Domitian and literature see the comprehensive analysis of Coleman 1986 and Newlands 2002, *passim*, pp. 7, 18, 29, 186, 280-1.

<sup>259</sup> The most famous example is Hor., *Carm.* 1.12, 46-48 *micat inter omnis/Iulium sidus velut inter ignis/luna minores*: it is not by chance that Statius reprises a reference to Augustus. For occurrences of the moon imagery in encomiastic literature cfr. Nisbet-Hubbard 1970, pp. 163-164, n. 48. As far as the *Silvae* are concerned, the identification with a *sidus* is common in imperial panegyric: 1.1, 43-44 and 103-104; 4.1, 1-4; 4.2, 10-12. In *Silv.* 2.6, 34-37 the eulogy for Flavius Ursus' favourite slave is a reflection of the encomium for the master. In the portrait of Evarinus in *Silv.* 3.4, we have seen that the youth's beauty can only be surpassed by the *dominus*, who is himself compared to the sun and the moon: *qualis eras! procul en cunctis puerisque virisque/pulchrior et tantum domino minor! illius unus/ante decor, quantum praecedat clara minores/luna faces quantumque alios premit Hesperos ignes*.



‘lighter’ poetry of the author (*tenuiore lyra*) is compared to oratory (*maius eloquium*, which interestingly recalls the expression *inferiore lyra* (*Theb.* 10, 446), employed by Statius when he compares his poetic work to Virgil. The traditional astronomical *topos* of encomium is associated with the Callimachean idea of the power of ‘small’ poetry, in order for Statius to negotiate his own authority as a poet. In this way, the images of the wandering<sup>260</sup> moon surrounded by the fixed stars, and of the streams of water contributing to create the ocean draw attention to the importance of lesser genres like the *Silvae* in the scenario of literary production.

The metaphor of the *vaga luna* also invites a reflection on power dynamics. For exploring this meaning, it is worth analysing it with a comparison with *Silv.* 3.3, 48-55:

(...) quid enim terrisque poloque  
parendi sine lege manet? vice cuncta reguntur  
alternisque premunt. propriis sub regibus omnis  
terra; premit felix regum diademata Roma;  
hanc ducibus frenare datum; mox crescit in illos  
imperium superis; sed habent et numina legem.  
servit et astrorum velox chorus et **vaga** servit  
**luna**, nec iniussae totiens redit orbita lucis.

Statius makes a cosmological argument from the social background of the *silva*, composed in honour of the death of Claudius Etruscus’ father, after a brilliant career that took him from slavery to be appointed knight by Vespasian. According to the image of the world of the court developed in the poem, the whole universe (both human and divine), appears to be subjected to the *lex parendi*; as a consequence of such an organised hierarchy, every role has its own relevance in the grand scheme of the cosmos. Nonetheless, as argued by Lotito in his article on *Silv.* 3.3, Statius’ approach “opera in realtà un ribaltamento delle motivazioni, per cui non è tanto la schiavitù ad essere riscattata quanto piuttosto la legge del potere diretto e monocratico ad essere radicalmente giustificata.”<sup>261</sup>

Moving from the reality of the empire to the world of the gods, we can see how the heavenly bodies also obey the rational law that rules the universe: as Gallicus works for the emperor, so the moon in the sky symbolises a similar service (*vaga luna servit*). The imagery that in *Silv.* 1.4 alludes *in nuce* to the relationship between officer and emperor becomes functional in *Silv.* 3.3 as an *exemplum* of the order ruling the universe. This is in fact the conclusion Lotito comes to: “l’attività stessa del funzionario trova perciò la sua funzione specifica in una struttura formale e razionale: in

<sup>260</sup> The adjective *vagus* referred to *luna* defines in fact free movement, opposed to the ‘fixed’ stars that rule it. Cfr. *OLD*, pp. 2004-2005, 1c, s. v. *vagus*: “moving freely from place to place, roaming, wandering (esp. of heavenly bodies).

<sup>261</sup> Lotito 1974, p. 311.

altre parole egli compie un servizio che ha i caratteri dell'universalità, e diventa egli stesso un agente ed un ingranaggio insostituibile della Ragione che ordina e amministra il cosmo."<sup>262</sup> What we can argue from this analysis of the poems is that the imperial court represents a microcosm where universal rules apply, and where Gallicus' activity contributes to heighten the emperor's prestige. Traditionally, the moon imagery is always employed for defining a prominent position within a system, as the moon is related to the other celestial bodies. The sun can act as a metaphor in a very similar way, especially within encomiastic contexts. In the frame of the court, the position of the moon opposite to the sun reflects in fact the actual hierarchy of power, as if Gallicus (the moon) represents the privileged 'satellite' of the emperor (the sun), thus possibly shadowing the other members of the imperial entourage (the stars). Statius' interpretation of a traditional *topos* of encomiastic poetry confirms once again the actual destination of the *silva*, the eulogy of the emperor. The transfiguration of the reality of the imperial court through the astrological imagery becomes the sign of an effective encomium.

The *fides* on which the relationship between Gallicus and Domitian is based leads to an extraordinary interest of Rome itself for the destiny of a single officer. The general apprehension for Gallicus' illness is therefore translated in the encomiastic pattern as a *sollicitus amor*, shared by everybody (vv. 38-39).

The image of the *bonus civis* created by the poet is underlined by Gallicus' moral qualities (vv. 43-49):

hoc illud, tristes invitum audire catenas,  
 parcere verberibus nec qua iubet alta potestas  
 ire, set armatas† multum sibi demere† vires  
 dignarique manus humilis et verba precantum,  
 reddere iura foro nec proturbare curules,  
 et ferrum mulcere toga. sic itur in alta  
 pectora, *sic mixto reverentia fidit amor*.

The virtues mentioned are qualities traditionally attributed to the *rex sapiens*: *clementia*, *parsimonia*, *modestia*, respect for the institutions. We might say that the ideal sovereign imagined by Seneca in the *De clementia* plays here a decisive role as a model for Statius, but it is possibly not the only source he may have taken inspiration from. *Clementia* and *parsimonia* represent the two main qualities the ideal *rex* should have: *conditum, immo constrictum aput me ferrum est, summa parsimonia etiam vilissimi sanguinis; (...) severitatem abditam, at clementia in procinctu habeo* (*Clem.* 1.1.3, 6-1). In addition to that, a good sovereign cannot act without regard to the institutions:

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<sup>262</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 312.

*sic me custodio, tamquam Legibus, quas ex situ ac tenebris in lucem evocavi, rationem redditurus sim* (Clem. 1.1.4, 2-4).

We have already seen how the relationship between Rome and his officer is based on a feeling of *amor* (vv. 38-39); the same concept is recalled by Statius a few lines later, when the gratitude of the city to Gallicus is expressed by a combination of respect and love (*mixto reverentia fidi*<sup>263</sup> *amori*). Again, already in Seneca the general consensus of the people acts as an anchor for the imperial *auctoritas*: *omnibus tamen nunc civibus tuis et haec confessio exprimitur esse felices* (Clem. 1.1.7, 9-10). In Statius' idealised portrait, Gallicus promotes the main virtues a good officer should have, and that in the frame of the imperial court should also pertain to the emperor himself. The presence of Seneca's precepts for the good sovereign strengthens the connection between Domitian and Gallicus, thus bringing the two figures together into one.

Gallicus' disease becomes itself proof of his *virtus*, being an effect of his incessant commitment (vv. 54-56):

Sed **labor** intendens animique in membra vigentis  
**imperium vigilesque suo pro Caesare curae,**  
**dulce opus.** (...)

The officer's life is only imagined within the relationship with the emperor, appropriately defined by the pronoun *suo*. The mutual *necessitas* they share in the world of the court heightens the actual nature of the collaboration, which goes from being a *labor* to be defined *dulce opus*, thus recalling the Sallustian idea of the dominance of mind over body (Cat. 1. 2): *animi imperio, corporis servitio magis utimur*.<sup>264</sup> In a political setting that might also have Stoic features, the ideology in the *silva* can be compared to the opposite view of Horace in *Carm.* 1.32, 13-16:

O decus Phoebi et dapibus supremi  
grata testudo Iouis, o **laborum**  
**dulce lenimen** mihi cumque, salve  
rite uocanti!

<sup>263</sup> Shackleton-Bailey 2003 corrects the transmitted reading *fidi* with *cedit*. Cfr. pp. 385-386: "subjects stand in awe of an efficient ruler (like Gallicus) whether they love him or not. But Gallicus has known how to make himself loved as well as revered, in fact even more loved than revered." However, the reading *fidi* stresses the concept of *fides*, which is appropriate as to define the relationship between Gallicus and the Roman people. Thanks to this mutual trust, the *reverentia* is legitimised by the *amor*. Cfr. OLD, p. 698, s. v. *fido*: "to rely (on)".

<sup>264</sup> This concept is later also reprised by Plinius in *Pan.* 82. 6: *Nec vero per se magno opere laudaverim duritiam corporis ac lacertorum; sed, si his validior ipso corpore animus imperitet, quem non fortunae indulgentia emolliat, non copiae principales ad segnitiam luxumque detorqueant, tunc ego seu montibus seu mari exerceatur, et laetum opera corpus et crescentia laboribus membra mirabor.*

In a setting that resembles the Epicurean *locus amoenus*, the poet professes his commitment to poetry in opposite terms compared to Statius. According to Horace, the true poetical inspiration can be only found in the freedom from anxiety and worries, whereas in Statius, Gallicus' existence is only imagined in a political context. How could we interpret such different interpretations of commitment? We may draw a comparison by saying that even if in different ways, both the figures end up identifying themselves with their own activity, being it poetry or politics. A confirmation of the commitment to one's activity is described in similar words by Lucretius, in the famous passage in which he declares the difficulty of his poetic task (DRN. 1, 136-146):

Nec me animi fallit Graiorum obscura reperta  
difficile inlustrare Latinis versibus esse,  
multa novis verbis praesertim cum sit agendum  
propter egestatem linguae et rerum novitatem;  
sed tua me virtus tamen et sperata voluptas  
suavis amicitiae quemvis efferre **laborem**  
suadet et inducit noctes **vigilare** serenas  
quaerentem dictis quibus et quo carmine demum  
clara tuae possim praepandere lumina menti,  
res quibus occultas penitus convisere possis.

The application of Lucretian language to politics for expressing Rutilius Gallicus' dedication to the empire shows how Statius is able to heighten the tones of the praise and make a sophisticated poetic allusion.

As we have seen at the beginning of the poem, Statius' *recusatio* of Apollo as a source of poetical inspiration does not prevent the figure of the god from being present in the poem for his power of healing, and acting as a spokesperson. This choice is determined by a clear encomiastic strategy, according to which Gallicus replaces Apollo for inspiring the composition. The mention of a sanctuary dedicated to Apollo near Gallicus' birthplace introduces the figure of the god (vv. 58-59). The *recusatio* of Apollo as a poetical Muse allows the poet to call upon him for a more urgent matter, helping Gallicus recover from the illness, with the assistance of his son Asclepius (vv. 60-65):

respicit heu tanti pridem securus alumni,  
progressusque moras: 'hinc mecum, Epidauria proles,  
hinc' ait 'i gaudens: datur (aggredienda facultas)  
**ingentem** recreare **virum**. teneamus adorti  
tendentes iam fila colos. **ne fulminis atri**  
**sit metus: has ultro laudabit Iuppiter artes.**

Apollo's presence in the poem stresses Gallicus' recovery as a necessity (he is an *ingentem...virum*<sup>265</sup>), given the importance of the role he plays for the emperor. The god's position becomes even more authoritative when he acts as a guarantee for Jupiter's protection. The *metus fulminis* alluding to the father of the gods recalls in fact the story of Hippolytus, brought back to life by Apollo and Asclepius without Jupiter knowing. The episode is narrated both by Virgil and Ovid, and read as an aetiology, since it is after his 'rebirth' that Hippolytus had his own Italic cult<sup>266</sup>. Even if Gallicus' recovery cannot be compared to Hippolytus', the intertextual allusion stresses the *necessitas* of Jupiter's protection, and as a consequence, also of his earthly counterpart, the emperor.

The gods' benevolence towards the *laudandus* is confirmed in the following lines by his successful military career under Vespasian and Domitian, which associates once more the destiny of Gallicus with the city of Rome.

The list of the military campaigns is livened by a *praeteritio* (v. 80 *quid revolvam*; vv. 83-86 *quid...laudem et...attollam*; v. 89 *non vacat*): the narration goes throughout the steps of the political career leaving an impression of endlessness to the readership. The effect so achieved is a fast accumulation and recording of the reactions (vv. 85-88):

(...) et *opes quantas nec qui mandaverat ausus  
expectare fuit*, [*gaudet* Trasimennus et Alpes]  
Cannensesque animae; primusque insigne tributum  
ipse palam *laeta* noscebat Regulus *umbra*.

Within the encomiastic pattern of the *silva*, the pacification of Libya is read as an ideal connection between Gallicus and Rome's glorious past, symbolised here by the first defeat of Carthage. The time gap vanishes into a communal feeling of joy shared by the sites where the historical battle took place: the lake Trasimene, the Alps, and Cannae. Following a well-known rhetorical convention, Statius confers human feelings on inanimate entities (*gaudet*) as an effect of the extraordinary nature of the *laudandus*.<sup>267</sup> As a conclusion of this passage, Gallicus is identified with the ideal successor of Regulus, the consul who made his name famous in the first Punic war. His *umbra laeta* acknowledges the success of Gallicus with clear awareness (*insigne tributum...noscebat*).

Nevertheless, looking back at the glorious past of Rome is not the only encomiastic strategy

<sup>265</sup> So is also defined Aeneas in *Aen.* 11, 124-125 '*o fama ingens, ingentior armis/vir Troiane*' (...).

<sup>266</sup> Verg., *Aen.* 7, 765-777; Ovid., *Met.* 2, 643-648, where it is disclosed to Asclepius his own destiny; *Met.* 15, 531-546.

<sup>267</sup> I have already analysed the similar attitude shown by Curtius in *Silv.* 1.1 and the active participation of natural elements in the encomium for Domitian in *Silv.* 4.3. The same connection is made between the *patroni* and their *villae* in *Silv.* 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, for which see chapt. 3c, p. 169.

employed in the poem, as a precise hint to the historical present is not neglected by Statius.<sup>268</sup> In the encomium Gallicus' financial duties in Libya are heightened to the status of an unexpected new source of money and luxuries for the empire (*opes quantas nec qui mandaverat ausus/exspectare fuit*), to the point that even the unappealing duty of taxation is seen as a *monstrum*. Gallicus' career reaches top success under Domitian, and more precisely during the campaign against the Dacians (85 A. D.). There is already a mention of it in *Silv.* 1.1, where this military achievement is included in the encomium for Domitian (vv. 25-27):

discit et e vultu quantum tu mitior armis,  
qui nec in externos facilis saevire furores  
das Cattis Dacisque fidem (...)

In the idealised imperial eulogy, the submission of the enemies becomes a demonstration of *clementia* that is even superior to Caesar's (*mitior armis*): the pacification of the subject people is guaranteed by an act of *fides*.<sup>269</sup> Therefore, in *Silv.* 1.4 Gallicus ideally continues on the same direction Domitian has indicated (vv. 90-93):

(...) quae *maxima* nuper  
*gloria*, depositam Dacis pereuntibus Urbem  
pandere, *cum tanti lectus rectoris habenas*,  
Gallice, Fortuna non admirante *subisti*.

For the first time in the poem, Apollo as a narrator directly addresses the *laudandus* (Gallice) when he underlines the importance of the officer's position in the court of Domitian. The association between the emperor and his *praefectus* comes to a full circle with the sharing of power, suggested by the famous political image of the reins, which defines Gallicus' duties on the one hand (*habenas...subisti*) and Domitian's on the other (*Silv.* 4.3, 130 *quo non dignior has subit habenas* and *Silv.* 5.1, 37-38 *deus qui flectit habenas/orbis*<sup>270</sup>).

In the social pattern so created, Gallicus' survival also represents the survival of the empire, according to the same idea that it is the emperor who guarantees the eternity of Rome and not vice

<sup>268</sup> Hardie 1983, p. 187: "Statius wishes to present Gallicus as a kind of republican ideal adjusted to the imperial system".

<sup>269</sup> The historiographical sources report a different version for Domitian's campaigns abroad: Tacitus (*Agr.* 39) and Suetonius (*Dom.* 6.1) in particular cast some doubts on the legitimacy of the triumphs celebrated by the emperor after these conquests. Cfr. also Geyssen 1996, p. 62, n. 62 and Coleman 1988, p. 78 *ad* 4. 1, 39.

<sup>270</sup> A relevant occurrence of this metaphor can be found in Cicero, *De Or.* 1, 226 *cui [senatui] populus ipse moderandi et regendi sui potestatem quasi quasdam habenas tradidisset*.

versa. In other words, Statius imagines the world of the court as a social space where every role played is tightly connected one with the other. This is the reason why in the microcosm of the imperial court Domitian is himself involved in guaranteeing Gallicus' recovery. In addition to that, the poet makes clear that it is the emperor, *Iuppiter in terra*, who can exercise his power, more than Apollo or Jupiter's benevolence and authority (vv. 94-96):

Hunc igitur, si digna loquor, *rapiemus iniquo,*  
*nate, Iovi. rogat hoc Latiae pater inclitus urbis*  
*et meruit; (...)*

In addressing Asclepius, the Delian god turns upside down the existing equilibrium between the earthly and divine worlds. In the effort of keeping Gallicus from the realm of Hades (*iniquo...Iovi*), the sovereign's will appears incontrovertible; even more, the emperor brings justice (*rogat*). The power ascribed to the celestial (or as in this case, infernal) gods is vain and intangible compared to the actions taken by Domitian on earth. The *iunctura* employed by the poet (*Latiae puer*) could not be more connected with Rome and the reality of the empire. Nonetheless, what it is clear from these lines is that the survival of both the empire and his officer is not due to a request, but to an imposition from a power that is stronger than the gods'; the verb used to express it (*et meruit*) and its position in *enjambement* both mark the felicitous result the readership expects.

The necessity to cure Gallicus imparts urgency to the narrative segment in which Apollo and Asclepius rely on every medical *remedium* they know (vv. 98-105). Their solicitude is eventually rewarded with the positive reaction of the 'patient'. However, the extraordinary nature of Gallicus is prominent even while he is fighting against the illness (vv. 111-114):

*Adiuvat ipse deos morboque valentior omni*  
*occupat auxilium.* citius non arte refectus  
 Telephus Haemonia, nec quae metuentis Atridae  
 saeva Machaonio coierunt vulnera suco.

Gallicus is set on a level of equality with the two gods curing him: the awareness he shows about his disease is very different from the traditional reactions<sup>271</sup>. He participates actively in his recovery (*adiuvat ipse deos*) and stoically tolerates the pain (*morbo...valentior omni*). He also shares the

<sup>271</sup> As an example, I quote the vast section in book 15 of the *Metamorphoses* (vv. 622-745) in which Asclepius defeats a plague in Latium. Ovid emphasises the god's divine status and the deep reverence felt by the citizens who call upon him. Cfr. e.g. vv. 626-633 *dira lues quondam Latias vitiaverat auras,/pallidaque exsanguisqualebant corporamorro./funeribus fessi postquam mortalia cernunt/temptamenta nihil, nihil artes posse medentum,/auxilium caeleste petunt mediumque tenentes/orbis humum Delphos adeunt, oracula Phoebi,/utque salutifera miseris succurrererebus/sorte velit tantaeque urbis mala finiat, orant.*

promptness of the gods and hyperbolically anticipates their intervention: this unusual ability ascribed to the officer is displayed by Statius with the expression *occupat auxilium*, which perfectly matches with *praegressus...moras* at v. 62: both the *iuncturae* are meant to underline once again the extraordinary nature of Gallicus.

In order to make the scene even more refined, Statius includes two *exempla* of mythical healers, Hercules and Machaon. The former is mentioned for the unusual episode in which he hit and subsequently healed with his own spear the king Telephus, as a demonstration of his own power<sup>272</sup>; the latter, a famous doctor and son of Asclepius himself, features together with his brother Podalirius in the *Iliad*.<sup>273</sup> What is worth noticing is that these examples are not positive. In the Ovidian narration, Telephus is hit by Hercules for having challenged his authority: his sparing comes *in extremis* as an act of *clementia* by the hero. In a similar way, Agamemnon is defined *metuentis*, and Machaon arrives to the battlefield only when the massacre ordered by the Achaean king has already started. Gallicus, in an opposite way compared to Telephus or Agamemnon, can rely on the trustworthy commitment of Apollo and Asclepius, who do not hesitate over curing him (*citius*). Through the recalling of the literary models the figure of Domitian's officer ends up acquiring also mythical depth, adding more elements to his transfiguration.

After this section, the encomiastic strategy adopted by Statius so far changes once again. After having efficiently associated Gallicus' fortune to the emperor's, the poet moves on to portray the relationship he has with the dedicatee, described in terms of affection and familiarity. As a consequence, the private pattern of this *amicitia* strongly contrasts with the officialdom of Gallicus' role at the court, thus calling also for different tones and language. An important aspect I would like to explore in fact is how Statius employs a 'language of *amor*' to describe his relationship with Gallicus. The usage of a lexicon borrowed from elegy is a well-known phenomenon of encomia<sup>274</sup>, and finds a particularly relevant application in contexts of imperial praise to describe the proximity of the emperor to his subjects. In a private context like the one analysed here, the preoccupation shown by Statius for his patron resembles the commitment of the lover-poet to his *domina*, and underlines the dynamics of their power relationship. In this way, *Silv.* 1.4 also displays a transfiguration of the poet, as well as of the addressee.

Statius introduces himself wondering what his position can be in the grand scheme of the

<sup>272</sup> This episode is also narrated by Ovid in *Met.* 13, 171-172 (...) *ego Telephon hasta/pugnantem domui, victum orantemque refeci*. Propertius records a review of mythical healers in *Eleg.*, 2.1, 58-64 *solus amor morbi non amat artificem./tarda Philoctetae sanavit crura Machaon,/Phoenicis Chiron lumina Phillyrides,/et deus extinctum Cressis Epidaurius herbis/restituit patriis Androgeona focus,/Mysus et Haemonia iuvenis qua cuspide vulnus/senserat, hac ipsa cuspide sensit opem*. The poet opposes the miraculous recoveries to the 'disease of love', for which there is no cure.

<sup>273</sup> Cfr. *Il.*, 2, 732; 11, 514-518; 11, 833.

<sup>274</sup> For an excellent discussion of this topic see Rosati 2003.



events narrated so far (vv. 115-120)

Quis mihi tot coetus inter populique patrumque  
sit curae votique locus? tamen ardua testor  
sidera teque, pater vatum Thymbraee, quis omni  
luce mihi, quis nocte timor, dum postibus haerens  
assiduus nunc aure vigil nunc lumine cuncta  
aucupor; (...)

Statius explores the intimate aspect of the narration and completes Gallicus' portrait with a less official approach. Statius in fact outlines the relationship as a sincere *amicitia* shared day after day. The poet's apprehension for the ill friend suggests some images of true familiarity, which hide behind their spontaneity a rhetorical strategy. Statius describes himself in a status of anxious vigilance just outside Gallicus' bedroom (*postibus haerens/assiduus*), at any time of day and night (*nunc aure vigil nunc lumine cuncta/aucupor*). The relevance of the threshold in describing the *amicitia* between the two figures has recently led Ruurd Nauta to read these lines as a clear reference to Statius as *cliens* and Gallicus as his *patronus*<sup>275</sup>. Even if this aspect is certainly undeniable in a relationship where the two members are not equal, at the same time it is my opinion that the poet is here also playing with poetic genres, and with a *topos* from love poetry in particular. Statius' position outside the door of Gallicus is not only the place where the clients stand, but also the lover's spot in the traditional *topos* of the *paraklausithyron*. In addition to that, the appeal to Apollo (*Thymbraee*) and to the celestial *sidera*<sup>276</sup> becomes an invitation to compassion and protection of a friendship. In the image created by Statius, the microcosm in which the emperor rules includes whoever takes part in it. The friendship between the poet and Gallicus is in fact based on the sharing of the same *Weltanschauung*, even if always regulated by the hierarchy of power (vv. 120-122):

(...) immensae veluti conexa carinae  
cumba minor, cum saevit hiems, pro parte furentes  
parva recepat aquas et eodem volvitur austro.

The traditional metaphor of the boat in the middle of a storm is here appropriately adapted by Statius in a 'modern' key<sup>277</sup>. The poet depicts himself as a little lifeboat (*cumba minor*) on a bigger

<sup>275</sup> Nauta 2008, pp. 152-153.

<sup>276</sup> Calling the stars as witnesses is also a *topos* from erotic poetry. See e. g. Prop. 2.9, 41 *sidera sunt testes*.

<sup>277</sup> The metaphor of comparing human life to a boat in the middle of the sea is traditional (useful on this topic Lotito 2001, especially pp. 15 ff.); however, it is the allegory of the ship used to describe a compromised political context to have had a better fortune in literature. I am reporting few significant moments: Alceus, *Fr.* 208, 1-15 Voigt and 6, 1-14 Lobel-Page; Teognides, *Eleg.* 1, 667-682; Horace, *Carm.* 1.14, on which cfr. also the introductions by Nisbet-Hubbard

ship (*immensae...carinae*), that does not hesitate to face (*receptat*) the strong waves and the twisting winds. The metaphor allows Statius to show sympathy for Gallicus' illness, bringing their destiny together. The allegory of the boat still keeps its original political meaning<sup>278</sup>, but also reminds to the famous elegiac theme of the *sarcina parva* developed by Ovid in his exile poetry. In *Ex P.* 1.3, 82-84, Ovid's wife expresses her devotion to her husband by declaring her will to follow him in exile: *te sequar et coniunx exulis exul ero...accedam profugae sarcina parva rati*.

The modesty shown by the poet in shaping a role for himself into this system surfaces again in the last lines of the *silva* (vv. 125-131)

Hic vitae natalis erit. tu Troica dignus  
saecula et Euboici transcendere pulveris annos  
Nestoreique situs. qua nunc tibi pauper acerra  
digna litem? nec si vacuet Mevania valles,  
aut praestent niveos Clitumna novalia tauros,  
sufficiam. sed saepe deis hos inter honores  
caespes et exiguo placuerunt farra salino.

The divine intervention on behalf of Gallicus is interpreted as a power able to create new life (*vitae natalis*), for which the traditional hoped-for-longevity wish appears strikingly appropriate. The adoption of a *topos* of the imperial encomium<sup>279</sup> for the eulogy of an officer acts as the final guarantee of the special relationship existing between him and the emperor. The long life of the empire is in fact based on who rules it, being it the sovereign or a simple *praefectus*.

In this universal project poetry apparently seems to be left aside from the grand scheme, and maybe only able to offer nothing but itself. With the traditional affected modesty, Statius defines himself *pauper*, and only able to sacrifice for Gallicus' recovery a fist of earth, spelt and a salt cellar<sup>280</sup>. However, the mention of *Troica saecula* and of *annos Nestoreos*, suggests a confrontation

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1970, pp. 178-182. It is worth noticing how different is the usage of this metaphor in *Silv.* 2.2, 139-142, where due traditional images merge: the identification of the quietness of the mind with a safe harbour and the assimilation of man to a boat that reaches the coast after the dangers of the sea. Pollius Felix symbolises the man who sails across the sea and finally reaches *securos portus*, opposite to the *vilis turba*, who is still in the middle of a storm (*nostras procellas*). According to the same image as Lucretius has depicted it, the wise man looks from the shore at the mankind still facing the waves (human desires and passions), to which he is already immune and detached. For the analysis of the metaphor in Statius cfr. Van Dam 1984, pp. 274-275 *ad* vv. 139-142, Newlands 2011, p. 154 *ad* v. 140 and Newlands 2002, pp. 172-173.

<sup>278</sup> Nauta 2008 suggests this metaphor could also evoke a meta-poetical meaning of the 'small' poetry of Statius as compared to the grand style of Gallicus (vv. 34-35).

<sup>279</sup> E.g. we have seen that Statius describes as a new beginning the moment he can attend the imperial banquet (*Silv.* 4.2, 13): *haec aevi mihi prima dies, hic limina vitae*.

<sup>280</sup> These are the traditional gifts donated to Janus: cfr. Ov., *Fasti* 1, 127-129 *Inde vocor Ianus; cui cum Ceriale sacerdos/imponit libum farraque mixta sale/nomina ridebis* (...). Statius remains here in a private dimension, as noted by Hardie 1983, p. 197: "the second half of the conclusion gives Statius' reaction to the recovery; it takes a private, religious, form, in contrast to the non-religious celebration in the *proemium* (only the Emperor's recovery from illness could be the occasion of genuine public thanksgiving). Statius' only concern is that it be worthy (*digna*) of Gallicus'

between the 'small' poetry of the *Silvae* and the epic poems of Homer and Virgil, and the frequent presence of Homeric or Virgilian characters in the longevity wishes constitutes an evidence of this potential 'competition' between literary genres. Moreover, the theme of the 'pauper poet'<sup>281</sup> is also widely employed in erotic elegy to promote poetry as the only gift the poet can give to the *puella*, in open competition with the *dives amator*, as stated for example by Tibullus (*Eleg*, 1.5, 61-66):

Pauper erit praesto semper, te pauper adibit  
 primus et in tenero fixus erit latere,  
 pauper in angusto fidus comes agmine turbae  
 subicietque manus efficietque viam,  
 pauper ad occultos furtim deducet amicos  
 vinclaque de niveo detrahet ipse pede.

In a similar way, in the final *sphragis* Statius draws attention to the relevance of his own poem in the frame of the praise of Gallicus with a direct appeal to the gods. The role reserved to poetry in the *silva* aims to create its own cosmological and mythological framework, which pulls the addressee into the poetic world, thus creating a memorial. In other words, Statius tests the limits of the language of praise by including a political theme in a poetic metaphor. According to the mythicisation of power typical of encomium, the figure of Rutilius Gallicus is praised within the idealized world of the imperial court, where divine and human elements coexist. The small gift of poetry that Statius declares he can offer at the end of the poem reveals its full potential in its ability to take a specific occasion (Gallicus' recovery) and turn it into an allusive and effective celebration of the microcosm of the empire. In this way, *Silv.* 1.4 adds another, important element to the transfiguration of reality: the direct involvement of the figure of the poet. Statius participates in the praise of the world of the court together with the divine and mythical figures, and sanctions the mutual negotiation of power between the encomiast, the emperor and the court.

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merits.”

<sup>281</sup> For the relevance of this theme in Horace cfr. Rudd 1954.

### (iii) *Silv.* 1.2 and *Silv.* 5.1: Elegy, elegiac language and the negotiation of power: the transfiguration of womanhood

The idealisation of reality that we have seen so far operating in Statius' encomiastic strategy applies also to the employment of different genres and styles. As I explained in the introduction, panegyrics for their very nature are a 'fluid' genre, and able to adapt to the specific context of praise.

In this section my aim will be to identify in two specific poems in the collection how the poet engages with the rhetoric of elegy, elegiac language and its *topoi*. If the metapoetic value of a poem like *Silv.* 1.2 has already been addressed by recent scholarship on the *Silvae*<sup>282</sup>, it is my belief that some considerations can still be made, especially for the relevance of this poem within the encomiastic strategy of the *Silvae*. Great attention has been paid to two main ideas. Firstly, it has been observed that *Silv.* 1.2 characterises the marriage between Arruntius Stella and Violentilla as the ultimate parting from elegy and its 'subversive' traits. Secondly, scholars have interpreted the female figures starring in these poems (Violentilla and Priscilla) as mixed models of traditional virtues and elegiac features. As it has already been discussed<sup>283</sup>, in classical culture and literature female figures followed a precise characterization. The model Statius presents appears to be a 'mixed' one, combining the traditional features of the Roman *matrona*<sup>284</sup> with the more controversial 'lightness' of the elegiac *puella*. The portraits that I will examine are examples of what Antonio La Penna has felicitously called 'ritratto paradossale'<sup>285</sup>, a formula meant to indicate the coexistence of contradictory traits in the same character.

In both these approaches the intent is to demonstrate how post-Augustan poetry reinterprets elegy as a 'normalised' genre that does not have any disruptive power any more. My intent is to insert these considerations in the discourse involving Statius' encomiastic strategy of transfiguring reality. The interpretation of elegy and elegiac models of women within the encomiastic frame will show in fact how the manipulation of womanhood and its literary representation (*i.e.*, elegy) contribute to the celebration of the idealized world of the *Silvae*.

Even if a certain standardisation of the genre might in fact have occurred, nonetheless the language developed by elegy finds its way beyond the frame of love matters. In the context of this chapter, the exemplum of Cornelia in the *Eleg.* 4.11 of Propertius functions as an important

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<sup>282</sup> See especially Rosati 1999a, pp. 158-163; the commentary of Pederzani 1992; Zeiner 2007 (who also briefly discusses *Silv.* 5.1). On elegy see also Rosati 2005.

<sup>283</sup> Hemelrijk 1999, with particular attention to the education of women.

<sup>284</sup> Again cfr. Hemelrijk 1999, pp. 14-16 for the description and related meanings of *matrona*.

<sup>285</sup> La Penna 2000.

archetypal model of traditional female virtues within the genre of elegy<sup>286</sup>. However, in my analysis I would like to focus in more detail on Ovid, who firstly experiments with new applications for the genre in both his poetic works of the exile, *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*. From the distant town of Tomi, the poet engages again with the elegiac distich in order to negotiate his return to Rome. In this analysis, the word negotiation is in fact a key idea: the Ovidian reinterpretation of the elegiac *repertoire* with political purposes represents what Statius would later have employed in his *encomia*. The Ovidian conversion of the elegiac lexicon to other fields such as personal appeals to friends and *encomia* for his wife shows an interesting interconnection between erotic and political dimensions. In both cases, the situation presented is identical: a *laudator* who needs to persuade and conquer a *laudandus*<sup>287</sup>. It is in particular in the poems addressed to his wife (*Tr.* 1.6, 3.3, 4.3, 5.2, 5.14; *Ex P.* 3.1) that Ovid adopts the elegiac language of his youth in an innovative way.

In the context of the present discourse, worthy of attention is the new way in which Ovid describes his relationship with his wife. The portrait emerging from this group of poems describes Fabia according to the standard traits of the elegiac *domina*, but with new connotations. For example, *dolor* and *pudor* acquire a deeper meaning as they represent Flavia's shame for Ovid's unhappy situation (*pudor*) and her personal suffering for his absence (*dolor*)<sup>288</sup>.

The general attitude of the poet towards his wife and *amici* appears to be a revisited version of the *praeceptor amoris* known from his elegiac past. The aspect that is more relevant relies in fact on the *utilitas* of the elegiac language and in its elaboration as poetry of conquest. With this aim in mind, Ovid accomplishes both a poetic and practical conversion of elegy. On the one hand, the employment of the elegiac metre casts some doubts on the detachment from the *ars* that caused his downfall; on the other hand, he is forced to adapt this language to the reality of the exile. For this reason (as it is more relevant to the present discussion), the portrait of Flavia represents the archetype of the new combined female model. From the poems dedicated to her, Ovid repeatedly argues that their destinies are deeply connected (*Tr.* 1.2, 43-44): *at nunc, ut peream, quoniam caret illa periclo, dimidia certe parte superstes ero*. The powerful description of Flavia's reaction at Ovid's departure from Rome defines her devotion to her husband (*Tr.* 1.3, 81-86):

'non potes avelli: simul ah! simul ibimus', inquit,  
*'te sequar et coniunx exulis exul ero.*  
 et mihi facta via est, et me capit ultima tellus:

<sup>286</sup> Dufallo 2003 speaks of 'restored behaviour'.

<sup>287</sup> On this subject matter in Ovidian elegiac poetry the scholarship is excellent. For the most noteworthy works cfr. Rosati 2003 (on the communal language of love and praise poetry); Labate 1987 and Fedeli 2003 (on the continuity between 'happy elegy' and 'sad elegy') with the most recent bibliography; Strohm 1971 and Nagle 1980 for more comprehensive contributions.

<sup>288</sup> See Fedeli 2003 p. 11.

accedam profugae *sarcina parva* rati.  
te iubet e patria discedere Caesaris ira,  
*me pietas: pietas haec mihi Caesar erit.*'

The motif of the *sarcina parva*<sup>289</sup> and the identification of love as the only ruler combine elegiac *topoi* with the traditional institution of marriage. The declared devotion is no longer the illicit love between the lover-poet and his *puella*, but between husband and wife. Ovid's intention is here quite clear: his several appeals to Flavia's empathy and strength hide the *utilitas* that her figure symbolises. Along with his friends in Rome, his wife represents the only possibility of an intercession for the exiled poet.

With this purpose in mind, Ovid defines the praise for his wife, both a model of traditional virtues and elegiac *gratia* (*Tr.* 1.6, 34-28<sup>290</sup>):

prima bonis animi conspicerere tui.  
sive tibi hoc debes, nullo *pia* facta magistro,  
cumque nova mores sunt tibi luce dati,  
femina seu princeps omnes tibi culta per annos  
te docet *exemplum coniugis esse bonae*,  
adsimilemque sui longa adsuetudine fecit,  
grandia si parvis adsimilare licet.

The praise for the beloved does not refer only to physical qualities, but also to more traditional virtues like *pietas* and *probitas*. Not only Flavia is an *exemplum coniugis*, but Ovid also implies that the perfection of such an attitude is not just an inner quality, but a lesson learnt from the wife *par excellence*, Livia<sup>291</sup>. It is interesting to spot in these verses what Ovid as a *praeceptor* will do even more openly later in the collection. The elegiac past in which the poet acted as *praeceptor amoris* for men and women finds its way in another kind of 'poetry of conquest', the one aimed at the different kind of love of family and friends. In this context, the more explicit declaration of this peculiar 'conversion' of elegiac language is to be found in the last, desperate poem Ovid dedicates to Flavia (*Ex P.* 3.1). The increasing appeals to his wife probably represent a sign of the fading hopes of the poet of obtaining forgiveness through the intervention of the *amici*.

However, in this poem Ovid resumes his role of *praeceptor* as he instructs Flavia on the best tactics for approaching the *princeps*' wife, Livia (vv. 114-166). These are only examples of a precise

<sup>289</sup> See Fedeli 2003, pp. 15-16.

<sup>290</sup> All modern editions accept this order for vv. 33 and 34.

<sup>291</sup> As pointed out by Rosati 2003, p. 58: "L'associazione delle doti del carattere (i *mores*) con la bellezza fisica (*forma*) costituisce la sintesi ideale della donna perfetta, che riunisce quelle virtù in grado sommo come una dea: l'iperbole che Properzio aveva immaginato per la sua Cinzia -l'essere l'unica donna degna del letto di Giove (2.3, 30)- diventerà con Ovidio un encomio regolarmente tributato a Livia, moglie di Augusto. E' lei l'unica donna che, eccellendo in ambedue le sfere, quella dei *mores* e quella della *forma*, risulta adeguata al Giove-in-terra Augusto."

transformation of the language of elegy from its primary love scenario to more complicated social situations.

In the present work it is not my aim to go into a detailed discussion of the rhetoric of the poetry of the exile, as the Ovidian scholarship on the subject is vast enough. What I hope my contribution to this discourse will be is to look deeper into how elegiac language and *topoi*, after the Ovidian elaboration, are employed in the peculiar frame of encomia in the two Statian poems. The connection between language of love and praise is an evident and well-known topic in Latin literature (that goes back to Hellenistic court poetry), but it has not been explored in its applications in the *Silvae* as a way to create a transfigured reality<sup>292</sup>.

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### *Silv.* 1.2

The epithalamium for Stella and Violentilla (*Silv.* 1.2) represents an ideal example of the metapoetic playfulness originated in the Ovidian poetry of exile. The strategic use of elegy for new socio-political purposes leads in fact to a detachment from the amatory material. Only the language remains, but its adaptability in both *topoi* and lexicon determines its success.

In *Silv.* 1.2 Statius' intent seems to go beyond the specific rules for composing an epithalamium, and it has been convincingly argued<sup>293</sup> that the poem aims in fact to integrate the genre of elegy within the imperial literature and values. In addition to that, Statius portrays the marriage between Stella and Violentilla as an ideal fusion of the Greek (Neapolitan) and Roman element that he himself embodies<sup>294</sup>.

The goddess of the same name, Elegy, appears *in propria persona* as a divine guest to the wedding, and disguises herself as one of the Muses (vv. 7-10):

quas inter vultu petulans Elegea propinquat  
celsior adsueto divasque hortatur et ambit  
alternum fultura pedem, decimamque videri  
se cupit et medias fallit permixta sorores.

The personification of Elegy is here functional to the metapoetic aspect of the poem. Willing to act as the tenth Muse, the goddess makes the first attempt to be part of the tradition of marriage, usually

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<sup>292</sup> See the useful observations of the mutual relationship between language of praise and love in Rosati 2003.

<sup>293</sup> Pederzani 1992 p. 38 and *passim*; Rosati 1999a, especially p. 160 ff.

<sup>294</sup> On this specific aspect see Rosati 2011b, pp. 22-25 and Newlands 2012, pp. 136-159.

the most hated institution for the elegiac lover. In these first lines, Elegy moves the first steps (*ambit*) from the refusal of the elegiac *nequitia* to serious social commitment. Amongst the Muses, Elegy is literally 'taller than the usual for her' (*celsior adsueto*), implying that contrary to her nature of 'hidden' poetry, she is now visible while still being perfectly disguised (*permixta*): a clever poetic declaration of what Statius aims to do with the rhetoric of language. The poetic argument acquires an even more significant meaning, for the coexistence of elegiac language and conjugal love reflects the ideal harmony of the empire. Therefore, this metapoetic game represents a 'paradoxical portrait': the deceitful and illicit world of elegy is not opposed to the public and dignified world of marriage any more. In the frame of the *silva*, the two spheres represent the two stages Stella has gone through for achieving his prominent social position.

His elegiac past is concentrated by Statius in the few lines of the *macarismòs* (vv. 26-37):

(...) cedant curaeque metusque,  
cessent mendaces obliqui carminis astus,  
fama tace: subiit leges et frena momordit  
ille solutus amor, consumpta est fabula vulgi  
et narrata diu viderunt oscula cives.  
tu tamen attonitus, quamvis data copia tantae  
noctis, adhuc optas permissaque numine dextro  
vota paves. pone o dulcis, suspiria, vates,  
pone: tua est. licet expositum per limen aperto  
ire redire gradu: iam nusquam ianitor aut lex  
aut pudor. amplexu tandem satiare petito  
(contigit) et duras pariter reminiscere noctes.

The formula of the *cedat-Priamel*, employed elsewhere in the *Silvae*, concentrates in few lines Stella's detachment from elegy (*curae; metus*) and satire/epigrams (*mendaces obliqui carmini astu*). With the marriage, the illicit love of the elegiac past is subdued to the imperial *mores* (*subiit leges*), and gains a stability unknown before (*frena momordit/ille solutus amor*). The elegiac metaphor of the constriction of love (*frena*)<sup>295</sup> acquires a new and reversed positive meaning. Cupid's arrows, usually feared and cause of tragic love, become here the perfect medium for bringing the couple together. In this way, Stella and Violentilla are depicted as unusual happy victims of Cupid, as the god proudly recalls (vv. 77-84; 90-94):

(...) edomui victum *dominaeque potentis*  
ferre *iugum* et longos iussi sperare per annos.  
Ast illam summa leviter (sic namque iubebas)  
lampade parcentes et inertī strinximus arcu.  
ex illo quantos iuvenis premat anxius ignes,

<sup>295</sup> For the elegiac motif see e. g. Ovid, *Am.* 1.2, 16 *frena minus sentit*.



testis ego attonito, quantum me nocte dieque  
urgentem ferat: haud ulli vehementior umquam  
incubui, genetrix, iterataque vulnera fodi.

(...)

(...) tu veteres, iuvenis, transgressus amores.  
ipse ego te tantos stupui durasse per aestus  
firmavique animos blandisque madentia plumis  
lumina deteresi. (...)

The display of elegiac *topoi* reaches here its climax. The redundancy of the expression *dominae...potentis* and the mention of the *iugum* both remind to the exclusivity of the love between the elegiac poet and his mistress.

At this point, it is probably legitimate to wonder whether Statius is playing a form of poetic *recusatio*. Within the interpretation I am following in the reading on the *silva*, the poet is not rejecting Stella's career as a composer of love poetry; on the contrary, Statius' operation seems to me to be more sophisticated. Through the passage from bachelorhood to marriage, the poet can outline the shifting of love language from courting and conquest of the beloved to praise of the two spouses.

Therefore, it is safe to assume that in a way Statius is following the example of Ovid's exile poetry: reconverting the language of love from the segregated world of elegy to the public world of the empire. This poetic attitude seems in fact to be confirmed by Statius' own words, when he argues that Stella can now publicly enjoy the kisses that the citizens (*fabula vulgi*) have long observed from a distance<sup>296</sup>. The transition is yet not registered as an easy step for the elegiac poet, and Statius concentrates Stella's concerns in a striking *iunctura* (*vota paves*). The poet reassures his friend about the legitimacy of this relationship by recounting relevant elegiac *topoi*. The *limen* is now open (*aperto...gradu*) and there is no *ianitor* to guard the door (*nusquam*); the classic elements of the *paraklausithyron* and the *exclusus amator* (*duras...noctes*) are replaced by a love that is granted by divine protection (*numine dextro*), moral and actual laws (*nusquam...aut lex/aut pudor*). This literary *tour de force* of the elegiac stereotypes not only registers the passage from Stella's youth to his new life as a married man, but can yet be interpreted as a metapoetic play. What may be inferred in fact, is that the *silva* is the actual place where the important passage from the 'light' poetry of the elegy and the traditional values of marriage is displayed. In a way, Statius proposes his hexameter poetry as the ideal fusion of elegiac language and *topoi* with the 'seriousness' of the imperial setting. That is the advice suggested by the words *pone o dulcis, suspiria, vates,/pone*, an

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<sup>296</sup> The motif of the general rumor is well-known in elegy. See the general remarks of Pederzani 1992 pp. 50-51 *ad loc.*

invitation to Stella to leave his elegiac past behind and to find new glory in serving the empire.

It is through the words of Cupid that the marriage is acknowledged as the climax of Stella's poetic dedication to the subject of love (vv. 93-102):

(...) quotiens mihi questus Apollo  
sic vatem maerere suum! **iam, mater, amatos**  
**indulge thalamos**. noster comes ille **piusque**  
signifer armiferos poterat memorare labores  
claraque facta virum et torrentes sanguine campos,  
sic tibi plectra dedit, mitisque incedere vates  
maluit et nostra laurum subtexere myrto.  
hic iuvenum lapsus suaque aut externa revolvit  
vulnera; pro! quanta est Paphii reverentia, mater,  
numinis! hic nostrae deflevit fata columbae.'

The traditional *recusatio* of epic poetry is here read as a full commitment to elegy and love poetry. In the climax of his *laudatio* to Stella, Cupid marks the marriage to Violentilla as the ideal reward for the poetic efforts. However, in the frame of the encomium, the suffering of the lover-poet is not let down by a *dura puella*, but blessed by the gods with marriage, yet described in elegiac terms (vv. 77-78): (...) *edomui victum dominaeque potentis/ferre iugum et longos iussi sperare per annos*. Statius' ability to play with different stylistic registers is here well displayed.

Nonetheless, the praise of the *laudandus* would not be complete without a mention of his inner qualities: *pietas* (*pius*), *claritas* (v. 70 *clarus*), *nobilitas* (v. 72 *Nobilitas*), *forma* (vv. 72-73 *praesaga...formae/...cognomina*).

Following up Cupid's praise of Stella, the employment of spokespersons for the delivery of the encomium continues with the description of Violentilla through the voice of Venus<sup>297</sup> (vv. 107-110):

(...) hanc ego, **formae**  
**egregium mirata decus** cui gloria patrum  
et generis certabat honos, tellure cadentem  
excepi fovique sinu; (...)

The virtues of Violentilla are presented in reversed order in comparison with Stella's: physical beauty is paralleled by *nobilitas*. Venus' speech reaches its climax when the goddess states that Violentilla's appearance could equal her own (vv. 112-113 *mihi dulcis imago/prosiluit*), with the usual encomiastic inversion of human and divine. This common feature is in fact strengthened by the identical expression we have already encountered in *Silv.* 3.4 when Venus sees Earinus (vv. 26 and 31) and mistakes him for one of her sons. The key-concept of *forma* reconciles the elegiac idea

<sup>297</sup> On this see also Coleman 1999, pp. 70-71.

of physical beauty with the more complex meaning the word acquires in the *silva*. In her contribution<sup>298</sup>, Noelle Zeiner has explained how the portrait of Violentilla is a mixed model (the *matrona univira* and the elegiac *domina*) created around the concept of *forma*.

The necessity of creating a new ideal role model offers evidence of the official image the empire was hoping to project. The *usus* that such model shows in the Ovidian poetry of the exile is employed by Statius for describing the contradictory reality of the Domitianic era. Violentilla's physical qualities and inner virtues do not contrast with her wealthy status. For this reason, she *vincit opes animo*<sup>299</sup> and represents the perfect combination of the ethic and esthetic values of the empire.

The *suasoria* to Violentilla pronounced by Venus represents an ideal example of how Statius is able to renew the traditional epithalamium. The goddess' speech, in fact, resembles quite closely an elegiac *praeceptum amoris*, but without the malice of the Ovidian works. The employment of Venus as a spokesperson is significant, and a poetic device the reader of the *Silvae* would have recognized. Nonetheless, the presence of the goddess of love and eros in the *suasoria* of a bride also calls attention to the 'conversion' of elegy that is been discussed. The pressing exhortations to Violentilla are stressed by three urging questions (vv. 162-165); but where the reader would expect to find such admonitions pronounced by the elegiac poet to his *puella* about the caducity of beauty<sup>300</sup>, Venus' words are instead pointed to a woman who is about to get married, and represents the best tradition of *fidelitas*, *pietas*, *probitas*. In a way, Statius accomplishes an audacious goal: to use the rhetoric of elegiac language to praise the public and legitimate sphere of love. If at the beginning of the *Ars* Ovid warned his potential prudish readers (*este procul, vittae tenues, insigne pudoris*), Statius appeals to them and proposes a 'reformed' treatment of elegy.

The 'promotion' of elegiac love is in fact activated on two different levels, expressed by the figure of Stella. With his double portrait as an elegiac poet and lover, the reformation of the literary genre becomes also a matter of social status. This aspect clearly emerges in Venus' prediction of a glorious future for Stella, not only as a poet but also as a man of the state (vv. 178-181): *iamque parens Latius, cuius praenoscere mentem/fas mihi, purpureos habitus iuvenique curule/indulgebit ebur, Dacasque (et gloria maior) /exuvias laurosque dabit celebrare recentes*.

The double nature of Stella as the author and the subject of his own poetry is stressed

<sup>298</sup> Zeiner 2007, pp. 167-176.

<sup>299</sup> See La Penna 2000, pp. 37-40 for more remarks.

<sup>300</sup> Cfr. Prop. 3.24, 31 ff. *at te celatis aetas gravis urgeat annis,/et veniat formae ruga sinistra tuae!/vellere tum cupias albos a stirpe capillos,/iam speculo rugas increpitante tibi,/exclusa inque vicem fastus patiare superbos,/et quae fecisti facta queraris anus!/has tibi fatalis cecinit mea pagina diras:/eventum formae disce timere tuae!* and Ov., *Her.* 1, 109 *nec mihi sunt vires inimicos pellere tectis*. The motif is of course traditional and goes back to Greek lyric and especially Anacreon.

throughout the whole poem, and often even in the same sentence. The groom's joy on the day of his wedding is in fact expressed by a striking passage (vv. 209-212):

quis tibi tunc alacri caelestum in munere claro,  
Stella, dies! quanto salierunt pectora voto,  
**dulcia** cum **dominae** dexter **conubia** vultus  
**adnuit!** (...)

The spheres of elegiac and marital love are here reunited by Statius in few key-words which bring together once again two opposed dimensions. The *dulcedo* is now a specific trait of the married life (*dulcia...conubia*) and the mistress finally resolves to reciprocate her lover's affection publicly (*dominae dexter...vultus adnuit*). In the following verses, the relationship is officially acknowledged by people of all social statuses (vv. 233-237). Finally, the wedding scene ends with the traditional closing of the doors of the nuptial chamber, which ironically goes back to be familiar territory for the elegiac lover and poet. At vv. 241-242, Statius in fact plays once more with the role of Stella, who is now not only an elegiac poet, but a husband (*maritus*) who sings about his married life (*noctem canat*).

The final remark made by Statius is worth analysing for the literary suggestions it evokes. As usual in the *Silvae*, a *Priamel* lists the most famous writers of elegy to whom Statius compares himself (vv. 252-255). The intention lying underneath is explained by the following couple of hexameters, where the poet argues that his extraordinary relationship with Stella and Violentilla represents the very inspiration for composing poetry (vv. 256-257):

me certe non unus amor simplexque canendi  
causa trahit (...)

In my opinion, the declaration of the multiple reasons for composing poetry (*non unus amor simplexque canendi causa*) might in fact allude to other literary genres, such as the epic works of the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid*. Is Statius possibly making post-elegiac suggestions for the poetic career of his friend Stella? If that was the case, this final declaration marks the ultimate transformation of elegiac poetry into a new type of 'official' literature of the empire.

In this analysis I have examined how Statius' encomiastic strategy in *Silv.* 1.2 is two-fold, as it activates a transfiguration of the figures of Stella and Violentilla, as well as the genre of elegy. We can see how the poet builds up his own language of praise in a way that enhances his addressees and promotes his own poetry at the same time. The intimacy Statius shares with the married couple makes it possible to balance an idealized praise with a personal friendship.

*Silv.* 5.1

Following *Silv.* 1.2, *Silv.* 5.1 offers another example of an idealized female figure, Priscilla. Building up on the more personal engagement of Statius with Stella and Violentilla, *Silv.* 5.1 offers a transfiguration of womanhood in a more official context. I will discuss how the idealized figure of Priscilla is deeply connected with the representation of her husband Abascantus, an imperial officer, and how the association with the imperial power influences this encomiastic *consolatio*. The figure of Priscilla in fact presents fascinating features, as it is interpreted through the image of death: as a deceased woman, she is the most suitable candidate for an idealized portrait.

The presence of the emperor is felt throughout the whole poem, even if an imperial destination is not openly declared. In opening the *silva*, as usual Statius calls upon him the divine inspiration of both Apollo and Domitian<sup>301</sup> for composing the *consolatio* (vv. 13-15): *dexter Apollo/quique venit iuncto mihi semper Apolline Caesar annuat*. The emperor's *persona* is mostly felt as a presence throughout the poem. The request for such a high inspiration already gives the readership the suggestion of the prestige of Priscilla<sup>302</sup>.

Statius describes her according to the *topoi* of the ideal Roman *matrona* (vv. 46-56):

passa alio, sed te ceu virginitate iugata  
visceribus totis animaue amplexa fovebat;  
(...)  
(...) tibi quamquam et origo niteret  
et felix species multumque optanda maritis,  
**ex te maior honos, unum novisse cubile,**  
**unum secretis agitare sub ossibus ignem.**  
(...)

The qualities ascribed to Priscilla make her stand as a traditional role model of loyalty and modesty. Within the encomiastic frame, her thorough commitment to Abascantus is not even overshadowed by the mention of a previous marriage (*marito...alio*) which does not affect her purity (*virginitate iugata*)<sup>303</sup>. The oxymoronic *iunctura* reveals here its encomiastic function, hence two contradicting elements are reunited to create an idea of *virtus*. The traditional wife preserves her virginal chastity within the marriage, usually identified with the overcoming of *virginitas*. Therefore, the employment of the oxymoron aims to gather together positive values even with the risk of an open

<sup>301</sup> On this see Rosati 2002a, pp. 246-248.

<sup>302</sup> Lovatt 2007, pp. 153-157 briefly analyses the role of Statius as *vates* in the *silva*.

<sup>303</sup> Cfr. the reference to Livia's remarriage to Augustus (Hor., *Carm.* 3.14, 5): *unico gaudens mulier marito*. I accept here the reading *iugata*, as referred to Priscilla, suggested by Gibson 2006a, p. 97 *ad loc.*

contradiction<sup>304</sup>.

In Statius' portrait, moral integrity acquires much more relevance than physical beauty (*ex te maior honos, unum novisse cubile*), thus offering a reinterpretation of the model of women in elegy. In both Tibullus and Propertius in fact the female figure undergoes an opposite representation as a pure character of beauty and desire, who often shows little morality and faithfulness. However, in such a new reality of love poetry, it is striking how the lover-poet still aims at traditional virtues like the loyalty of his beloved; the readership is left with a feeling of an open contradiction that is, in fact, the most characteristic trait of the elegiac poets (and already of Catullus).

In *Eleg.* 1.3, Propertius describes a sleeping Cynthia, while he adorns her with love tokens. The verses display a portrait of the girl in which her beauty is the dominant trait (vv. 21-24):

Et modo solvebam nostra de fronte corollas  
ponebamque tuis, Cynthia, temporibus;  
et modo gaudebam lapsus formare capillos;  
nunc furtiva cavis poma dabam manibus;

The attention to the aesthetic qualities of the beloved *puella* can also be found in Tibullus, who complains about Delia's betrayal and ends up begging for her return (1.5). The motif of the poet's attraction is explicit (vv. 43-44): *non facit hoc verbis, facie tenerisque lacertis/devovet et flavis nostra puella comis*. It is clear then how the model offered by Priscilla represents a synthesis of the elegiac *puella* and the republican wife *univira*<sup>305</sup>. Her virtues are not limited to conjugal loyalty, but are interwoven with parsimony and a cheerful disposition (vv. 60-66):

si Babylonos opes, Lydae si pondera gazae  
Indorumque dares Serumque Arabumque potentes  
divitias, mallet cum *paupertate pudica*  
*intemerata mori vitamque rependere famae*.  
nec frons triste rigens nimiusque in moribus horror  
sed *simplex hilarisque fides et mixta pudori*  
*gratia*. (...)

Alongside the Ovidian fusion of the two female models, and, on a metapoetic level, of elegy and encomiastic poetry, Statius makes a further step and includes the figure of the emperor in the social

<sup>304</sup> Oxymoron and paradox are amongst the most effective rhetorical tools used in encomiastic literature of the Flavian age. Many examples are to be found in Martial for example, as noted by Fabbrini 2007, pp. xvii-xviii.

<sup>305</sup> On the representation of the *matrona univira* cfr. Hemelrijk 1999, p. 14-16 and *passim*. Rosati 1999a, p. 162 sums up the idea of the synthesis (with reference to the figure of Violentilla in *Silv.* 1.2, but also valid for Priscilla): "L'intention de Stace est justement d'intégrer, avec les corrections opportunes, l'éros élégiaque dans le monde des sentiments conjugaux: Mademoiselle Elegie, la jeune femme aguichante et séduisante, au comportement moralement inconvenant, se pose en Madame Elégie, en matrone pudique et respectable, dont le pas régulier est l'expression extérieure de la dignité et du décorum des valeurs sociales."

dynamics of the *silva*. The description of Priscilla as the ideal woman is not only reflected in the portrait of her husband Abascantus, but ultimately also in the perfection of Domitian.

In a similar way to Violentilla, Priscilla's modesty is also extended to the management of her wealth, a pivotal topic of the *Silvae* that is thoroughly legitimised especially in the encomia of the *patroni*<sup>306</sup>. Her qualities have a communal basis in the *pudor* (*paupertate pudica; mixta pudori gratia*), that becomes the most prominent trait of Priscilla. It can be inferred that the *pudor* that here confers credibility and depth to the female figure is far from the artificial and ironic meaning it had in Ovid (*Am.* 2.4, 11-12): *Sive aliqua est oculos in me deicta modestos, / uror et insidiae sunt pudor ille meae*. In the playful view of the lover-poet a gesture of prudery becomes an instrument of erotic conquest.

As we have seen for Violentilla in *Silv.* 1.2, who *vincit opes animo* (v. 122), the characterisation of Priscilla also includes the choice of living a modest life despite her wealth (vv. 117-126):

*nec* tamen hic mutata quies probitasve secundis  
*intumuit*: tenor idem animo moresque modesti  
 fortuna crescente manent. (...) *ipsa dapes modicas et sobria pocula tradit*  
*exemplumque ad erile monet*, velut Apula coniunx  
 agricolae parci vel sole infecta Sabino,  
 quae videt emeriti iam prospectantibus astris  
 tempus adesse viri, propere mensasque torosque  
 instruit expectatque sonum redeuntis aratri

A lifestyle based on *frugalitas* averts the risk of excessive pride (*nec...intumuit*)<sup>307</sup> and assimilates the couple to the ancient people of the Sabines, famous for their strict lifestyle in addition to being part of the initial growth of the Roman offspring. Virgil in fact mentions them as an example of the healthy *rusticitas* on which Rome was founded (*Georg.* 2, 532): *hanc olim veteres vitam coluere Sabini*. Despite the great tradition before him, Statius adds to it an innovative element, the *imitatio principis* (*exemplum...ad erile monet*), hence the officers of the empire engage in a sober way of living equal to that of the emperor<sup>308</sup>. Statius experiments with a reprise of a human model (Hor., *Carm.* 6.3, 39 ff.) which had already gone through the irreverent elaboration of Ovid; in the

<sup>306</sup> The topic is too vast to be discussed here. On this subject cfr. the relevant works of La Rocca 1986 and La Penna 1989. On the *Silvae* only, cfr. Corti 1991, Connors 2000, Myers 2000 and Zeiner 2005. On the same topic in Martial cfr. Rosati 2006 (especially pp. 52-58) and more recently the exhaustive work of Fabbrini 2007.

<sup>307</sup> Extreme pride can in fact attract divine enviousness. The verb *intumesco* often acquires the meaning of “become proud beyond measure”. Cfr. e. g. *Met.*, 5, 305 where the nine Pierides challenge the Muses in a singing contest: *intumuit numero stolidarum turba sororum*. Cfr. OLD, p. 956, 4, s. v. *intumesco*: “to become swollen, puffed up (with pride)”.

<sup>308</sup> Cfr. Lotito 1974, p. 339 and footnote 102.

catalogue of the types of women in the *Amores* he also lists the Sabines (*Am.* 2. 4, 15-16): *Aspera si visa est rigidasque imitata Sabinas, / velle sed ex alto dissimulare puto*. In the Ovidian interpretation, a traditional idea is transformed in a fictional image which is functional to the erotic courting; in the *Ars amatoria*, the tanned skin of the Sabine woman becomes a grotesque detail (3, 303 *illa, velut coniunx Umbri rubicunda mariti*)<sup>309</sup>.

In Statius the archaic model of the Sabines is transferred and reconciled with the imperial propaganda and becomes a distinctive encomiastic *topos*. Ovid's playfulness is avoided in this case, and the reprise of the Horatian image creates a mildly archaic tone in the description of Priscilla. Since the *epicedion* is eventually resolved in an encomium, Statius necessarily builds up the portrait of the wife as a reflection of the husband; Abascantus being a *homo novus* from humble origins, Priscilla's wealth must be matched by a sober and traditional lifestyle.

In order to fulfill this principle, the conjugal devotion is a response to the encomiastic need of obtaining divine protection (in other words, imperial benevolence) on behalf of Abascantus; it is only in this way that he can be the perfect officer<sup>310</sup> (vv. 67-75):

(...) quodsi anceps metus ad maiora vocasset,  
 illa vel armiferas pro coniuge laeta catervas  
 fulmineosque ignes mediique pericula ponti  
 exciperet. ***melius, quod non adversa probarunt  
 quae tibi cura tori, quantus pro coniuge pallor.  
 sed meliore via dextros tua vota marito  
 promeruere deos, dum nocte dieque fatigas  
 numina, dum cunctis supplex advolveris aris  
 et mitem genium domini praesentis adoras.  
 audita es, venitque gradu Fortuna benigno.***

Priscilla's dedication to her husband is described by Statius through the *topos* of the lovers' or friends' desire to follow their beloved or friend 'to the end of the world'. In this case, the conjugal contest reminds to a specific application of the *topos*, which can be found mainly in epic, but can also be employed in different contexts<sup>311</sup>. In the following lines, Priscilla's devotion shows the traits of the elegiac lover, with a surprising role inversion and an interesting use of elegiac language<sup>312</sup>.

The *cura* and *pallor* are not the signs of suffering of the *exclusus amator*, but the

<sup>309</sup> Cfr. also the ironic portrait described by the character of Alphius in Hor., *Epod.* 2, 39-48: the Sabin and Apulian women are symbols of the *pudica mulier*. However, the praise of the rural life is ironic as it is pronounced by a wealthy usurer.

<sup>310</sup> Effective here Lotito 1974, p. 348: "La tipologia di questa dama di corte ci appare dunque come la proiezione efficientistica del marito. Essa è la moglie ideale del perfetto burocrate di corte." Cfr. also La Penna 2000, pp. 42-43 and Zeiner 2007, pp. 178-179.

<sup>311</sup> See Gibson 2006a, pp. 106-107 *ad* vv. 67-69. On the encomiastic use of this *topos* in *Silv.* 3.2 see chapt. 3b, p. 154.

<sup>312</sup> Gibson 2006 *ibidem*.



manifestation of the devotion of Priscilla to her marriage (*tori*) and her husband (*pro coniuge*). The incessant prayers to the gods for the welfare of Abascantus are reminiscent of the elegiac efforts carried out by Stella: (*Silv.* 1.2, vv. 32-33) *permissaque numine dextro/vota paves*; (*Silv.* 5.1, vv. 73-74) *melior via dextros tua vota marito/promeruer deos*.

From the focus on her husband, the second part of the passage shifts to Priscilla's *pietas*, which means more than a simple religious devotion towards the gods. Her sentiment in fact becomes a form of *captatio benevolentiae* to the gods (*dextros...deos*) but more prominently to the god on earth Domitian (*genium domini praesentis*). He is the real recipient of her incessant prayers (*nocte dieque fatigas/numina*)<sup>313</sup>. In this scenario, Priscilla and Abascantus appear to share the same life choice, completely dedicated to their life together in the private sphere, and to serve the emperor in the public sphere. This form of 'symbiosis' also means sharing difficulties (vv. 119-120): *fovet anxia curas/coniugis hortaturque simul fallitque*<sup>314</sup> *labores*. Official obligations become a positive *labor*, which loses any negative connotation and likens Abascantus to the other example of the ideal imperial officer, Rutilius Gallicus in *Silv.* 1.4.

The traditional *pietas* ascribed to female characters gains here an instrumental value that accords a favourable destiny to Priscilla, resolved in the imperial protection (*venitque gradu Fortuna benigno*). The idea of *Fortuna* has an interesting new philosophical application in the encomiastic context of the poem, as the imperial authority replaces Fate in its traditional meaning<sup>315</sup>.

In the occasion of the prestigious position of Abascantus in the court of Domitian, Priscilla's thanksgiving is not directed to Fate, but to the sovereign (vv. 108-116):

qualem te superi, Priscilla, hominesque benigno  
aspexere die, cum primum ingentibus actis  
admotus coniunx! vicisti gaudia certe<sup>316</sup>  
ipsius, *effuso dum pectore prona sacratos*  
*ante pedes avide domini tam magna merentis*  
*volveris*. Aonio non sic in vertice gaudet,  
quam pater arcani praefecit hiatis antri  
Delius, aut primi cui ius venerabile thyrsi  
Bacchus et attonitae tribuit vexilla catervae.

The couple's fortune lies in the protection the emperor has granted them. For this reason, Domitian's

<sup>313</sup> Cfr. Gibson 2006a, p. 106 *ad* vv. 71-74 for some examples of epic female figures who obtain divine favour with prayers and sacrifices.

<sup>314</sup> I accept here the emendation of *flectitque* (M). See Gibson 2006a, pp. 120-121 *ad loc.*

<sup>315</sup> In this way reads the poem Lotito 1974, pp. 349-350 and *passim*.

<sup>316</sup> I accept here the emendation of Markland 1827 for the transmitted *cene* (M), followed also by Gibson 2006a. Shackleton-Bailey 2003 prefers Burman's correction *paene*. *Certe* is preferable because "emphasises Priscilla's pleasure, thus flattering Abascantus" (Gibson 2006a, p. 119 *ad loc.*).

power over his subjects paradoxically becomes evidence of his divine status, and it is in this role that Priscilla regards him (*prona sacratos ante pedes...volveris*). Again, the verb *volvere* is employed for stressing the superhuman status of Domitian, who is honoured with the same lexicon reserved to the gods. Moreover, Priscilla detaches herself from the divine sphere of the emperor, as Statius describes her in a human and feminine gesture (*effuso...pectore*). As usual in Statius, the recipient of the encomium appears superior to the mythical figures and marks also the divine superiority of Domitian to Apollo and Bacchus.

The prophetic function given to Priscilla in the moment she is passing away is anticipated by the *descriptio mortis*, where the dimension of private sorrow and the pathos of the epic death meet (vv. 170-175; 194-196):

iamque cadunt vultus **oculisque novissimus error**  
 obtusaeque aures, nisi cum vox sola mariti  
 noscitur; **illum unum media de morte reversa**  
**mens videt**, illum aegris circumdat fortiter ulnis  
**immotas obversa genas, nec sole supremo**  
**lumina sed dulci mavult satiare marito.** (170-175)

haec dicit labens sociosque amplectitur artus  
 haerentemque animam non tristis in ora mariti  
 transtulit et cara pressit sua lumina dextra. (194-196)

The conjugal devotion of the couple does not fade away in the extreme moment of death. The first hypotext Statius employs is with no doubt the description of Dido's death in the fourth book of the *Aeneid*, in which the queen makes the resolution of committing suicide after being abandoned by Aeneas (vv. 688-692):

Illa **gravis oculos** conata attollere rursus  
 deficit; infixum stridit sub pectore vulnus.  
 Ter sese attollens cubitoque adnixa levavit,  
 ter **revoluta torost oculisque errantibus alto**  
**quaesivit caelo lucem ingemuitque reperta.**

Dido's tragic situation can hardly be compared to Priscilla's peaceful death: the solitude of the queen even in the pivotal moment of death has an influence on her last, tormented acts (*conata attollere; deficit; stridit...vulnus; ter sese attollens; ter revoluta torost; ingemuit*). The mutual sign of the incoming death, the steady eyes<sup>317</sup>, acquires a different meaning in the two scenes. Whilst for Dido

<sup>317</sup> Camilla is also described in similar terms in the extreme moment of her death (*Aen.* 8, 818-819): *labuntur frigida leto/lumina*.

the *gravis oculos* represent the inevitability of fate, for Priscilla the *immotas genas*<sup>318</sup>, set on Abascantus' face, become the symbol of the very last farewell.

The failure of Dido's expectations dramatically contrasts with the happy outcome of the marriage of Abascantus and Priscilla, even in the last moments they can share. The queen reaches for the sky with her eyes for the last time, aiming to the sunlight (*oculis...errantibus alto quaesivit caelo lucem*), and eventually passes away (*ingemuit...reperta*). The *descriptio mortis* ends with a tragic image of pain and loneliness, which occurs on an empty thalamus (*revoluta torost*).

Statius craftily shows the presence of the Virgilian tragic heroine when he also describes the last moments of Priscilla. Like Dido, she looks around for the last time (*oculisque novissimus error*, a punctual reprise of Dido's *novissima verba* of v. 650). If the *iunctura* is similar in the two scenes, the restless and desperate look on the queen's face is opposed to Priscilla's, whose glance is comforted by Abascantus', hence she does not feel the need of raising her eyes to the sky (*nec sole supremo/lumina sed dulci mavult satiare marito*)<sup>319</sup>. The choice of words stresses his detachment from the Virgilian model and clarifies his intent: in death as in life, the figures of Priscilla and Abascantus merge into one, and this aspect is already implied in the description of a specific gesture. Priscilla's last words finally reveal the encomiastic function of her figure in the *silva*. The poetic depth granted by the comparison to Dido heightens the tones of the *descriptio mortis* but at the same time stresses her peaceful destiny.

The special relationship shared by the couple leads to an interesting representation of their individual figures. As it has been said before, Statius develops a portrait of Priscilla that confers on her qualities that are also relevant for her husband. The 'reflecting' function of the female figure is far from the traditional characterisation and becomes the most prominent trait of the encomium. The *epicedion* celebrates only on a first level the qualities of the deceased woman, since the *laudatio* is, in fact, silent (Priscilla is dead). The encomium is reflected by her presence for praising rather the other *laudandi*, Abascantus and most of all, the emperor. This 'reflecting' function activates a much more complex praise for Domitian, for which the indirect encomium innovates the effects of a direct *laudatio*. As we have seen, the poet is not in contrast with elegiac poetry, but draws a new model of virtue combining traditional and more innovative elements. The novelty lies in fact in the function of the two main characters, whose moral integrity reflects the imperial authority: the perfect equilibrium that rules the life of the couple is the same that distinguishes the imperial

<sup>318</sup> In the description of Niobe's petrification, Ovid employs the literary meaning of the adjective (*Met.* 6, 304-305): *in vultu color est sine sanguine, lumina mestis/stant immota genis, nihil est in imagine vivum*.

<sup>319</sup> Cfr. Gibson 2006a, p. 140 *ad* v. 174. A similar scene occurs between a dying Atys and his spouse Ismene in *Theb.* 8, 647-654): (...) *quater iam morte sub ipsa/ad nomen uisus defectaque fortiter ora/sustulit; illam unam neglecto lumine caeli/aspicit et uultu non exatiatur amato./Tunc quia nec genetrix iuxta positusque beata/morte pater, sponsae munus miserabile tradunt/declinare genas; ibi demum teste remoto/fassa pios gemitus lacrimasque in lumina fudit*. For the analysis of the ephebic figure of Atys cfr. La Penna 2000, pp. 153-156.

microcosm.

In the description of Abascantus, it is easy to find all the characteristics already seen in Priscilla, like *pietas* (v. 4 *egregia pietate*; v. 76 *pii iuvenis*; v. 238 *pietate mariti*; v. 253 *pio...marito*) and conjugal devotion, whose pivotal expression is reached in the moment of Priscilla's death. Crying and tears play a crucial role in the poem, and it is not difficult to agree with Bruce Gibson when he argues that "there is a sense in which the poem, whilst ostensibly presented as a consolation, actually celebrates the very grief it is intended to assuage."<sup>320</sup> The references to the act of crying can be found *passim* throughout the *silva*: *flere* (v. 20); *gravibus oculis uxorius instat/imber. Habentne pios etiamnum haec lumina fletus?* (vv. 31-32); *flentem...maritum* (v. 161); *illacrimat* (163).

Within the matrimonial frame, husband and wife share the same set of values, which is reflected through Priscilla on Abascantus and Domitian: those are in fact the real recipients of the complex encomiastic strategy of the *silva*. But if Priscilla accomplishes her existence only in the private relationship with her husband, by contrast the latter also has a public profile. The portrait of Abascantus as the ideal husband is nothing but the reflection of his public role. Like Rutilius Gallicus in *Silv.* 1.4<sup>321</sup>, he is also identified with his work (vv. 76-79):

vidit quippe pii iuvenis *navamque quietem*  
*intactamque fidem* succinctaque pectora *curis*  
et *vigiles sensus* et digna evolvere tantas  
*sobria corda* vices (...)

The imperial officer is compared to a follower of the Epicurean doctrine, conveniently adapted to the mundane frame of the court. Therefore, *industria* and *labor* are associated with ataraxy and equanimity, two philosophical ideas which here acquire a new meaning. If the Epicurean philosopher ideally imagines himself in a *locus amoenus* detached from rest of the world, on the contrary the officer is completely involved in the imperial mechanisms, thus offering his moral virtues to serve the empire. The oxymoron *navam quietem*<sup>322</sup> concentrates this new life style, in which peace of mind and laboriousness distinguish the perfect officer: another confirmation of the efficacy of the oxymoron as a distinctive trait of the encomium. As in *Silv.* 1.4, the figure of Abascantus becomes a projection of the sovereign, but with a more complicated hierarchy of social dynamics that also involves the character of Priscilla.

<sup>320</sup> Gibson 2006a, p. xxxv.

<sup>321</sup> We have seen that a similar lexicon is employed (vv. 54-55): *Sed labor intendens animique in membra vigentis imperium vigilesque suo pro Caesare curae*.

<sup>322</sup> The adjective usually marks laboriousness. Cfr. *Sil.* 4, 485 *navo labore*. However, in the *Silvae* the positive value of *quies* is frequently stated: cfr. e. g. *Silv.* 1.3, 91, where the *fecunda quies* ascribed to Manilius Vopiscus is also an oxymoronic expression with an encomiastic intent. Cfr. *OLD*, P. 1162, s. v. *navus*: "diligent, industrious, active".

In the *Consolatio ad Polybium* Seneca gives evidence of the employment of this lexicon<sup>323</sup>, when he addresses a prominent freedman of Claudius and formulates a hyperbolic praise of the emperor (7. 1-2):

Vide quantam huius in te *indulgentiae fidem*, quantam *industriam* debeas (...); omnium somnos illius *vigilia* defendit, omnium otium illius *labor*, omnium delicias illius *industria* (...).

The relationship established between the emperor and his officers becomes a form of *necessitas* that is often hidden by the encomiastic language. In the *silva*, Priscilla's death is followed by Abascantus' desperation, and the officer holds himself from committing suicide only for his duties at the imperial court (vv. 205-208):

ille etiam certe<sup>324</sup> rupisset tempora vitae,  
ne tu Tartareum chaos incommitata subires,  
*sed prohibet mens fida duci firmataque*<sup>325</sup> *sacris*  
*imperii et maior amor.*

The idea of restraining from death for the bigger cause of the empire also reinforces the connection between Abascantus and Domitian, as in *Sily.* 1.1 Curtius imagines that Rome would have prevented the emperor from sacrificing himself (vv. 82-83): (...) *temptasses me non audente profundo/ire lacu sed Roma tuas tenuisset habenas*. In the logical dimension that guides the ideal officer his love for her deceased wife can only be surpassed by the one for the emperor (*maior amor*). Statius completes the conversion of the elegiac language to its application in political and official praise. The poet also focuses on the motif of grief and presents Abascantus as the ideal officer for Domitian. In the microcosm so created, the emperor and the court share the same destiny, as stated also by Seneca (*Ad Polyb.* 7, 3-4):

Caesare orbem terrarum possidente impertire te nec voluptati nec dolori nec ulli alii rei potes: totum te Caesari debes. Adice nunc quod, cum semper praedices cariorum tibi spiritu tuo Caesarem esse, *fas tibi non est salvo Caesare de fortuna queri: hoc incolumi salvi tibi sunt tui*, nihil perdidisti, non tantum siccis oculos tuos esse sed etiam laetos oportet; *in hoc tibi omnia sunt, hic pro omnibus est.*

In the author's view, the survival of the sovereign grants the survival of the empire, hence private

<sup>323</sup> For the meanings of the terms here employed and their value during the Republic cfr. the punctual explanations of Lotito 1974, p. 336.

<sup>324</sup> I accept here the reading *rectae*, transmitted by later mss. of the *Silvae* (see Gibson 2006a, pp. 150-151 *ad loc.*).

<sup>325</sup> The recent correction by Winterbottom for the transmitted *mirandaque* is accepted by Gibson 2006a; Courtney 1990 suggested instead the gerundive *firmandaque*, accepted also by Shackleton-Bailey 2003. The participle *firmata* seems preferable as it explains the imperial order that prevented Abascantus' attempted suicide.

suffering and mourning cannot exist. As a consequence, the private dimension of human existence is read with a propagandistic purpose, to serve the imperial power. The officer reflects the public image that the sovereign wants to promote, even in his personal life. This encomiastic principle applies to Abascantus when the sumptuous tomb of Priscilla invites a comparison with the temple of the Flavians (vv. 239-246):

(...) 'est hic, agnosco, minister  
 illius, aeternae modo qui sacraria genti  
 condidit inque alio posuit sua sidera caelo.'  
 sic, ubi magna novum Phario de litore puppis  
 solvit iter iamque innumeros utrimque rudentes  
 lataque veliferi porrexit bracchia mali  
 invasitque vias, *in eodem angusta phaselos*  
*aequore et immensi partem sibi vindicat austri.*

The minister becomes a 'miniature' projection of the emperor, a small but necessary component of the imperial machine. This encomiastic strategy casts a favourable life on Abascantus' position, but it is in fact, an appeal to the power of Domitian<sup>326</sup>. The interdependence that relates the emperor to the members of the court is expressed with the traditional metaphor of the ship, in perfect symmetry with the similar image found in *Silv.* 1.4, 120-122. The traditional motif, that (conveniently rearranged) is also largely employed in elegiac poetry<sup>327</sup>, finds here a different application. In opposition to Rutilius Gallicus, who is symbolised by a little boat as part of the big imperial ship, Abascantus is represented by an *angusta phaselos* which struggles to find its space in the big sea next to the *magna puppis*. The poet disguises with a metaphor Abascantus' claim.

As I have argued so far, the portraits of Priscilla and Abascantus play a core role in the encomiastic purpose of the *silva*, which looks at the two main characters but also focuses on the figure of Domitian. *Fides* and *pietas* often act as instruments for the *captatio benevolentiae*, in order to make Abascantus obtain a favourable position.

In order to achieve this aim, Domitian is set as the main focus of the *silva*, even if he is not directly involved in the narration. The two main traits that distinguish his role are omniscience and disassociation from the cruel fate that has led Priscilla to a premature death<sup>328</sup>. As it has been said before in this work, in the microcosm of the court the emperor plays a role equal to the one of

<sup>326</sup> The *consolatio* for the death of Priscilla, occurred more than a year before the publication of the *silva*, appears in fact more like an excuse for the composition. The real purpose seems to be an attempt to persuade Domitian to give to Abascantus a position in the court he held previously. So Hardie 1983, pp. 185-186, Nauta 2002, p. 302 and Gibson 2006a, pp. 71-75.

<sup>327</sup> It is once again the classic *topos* of the *sarcina parva*. For examples cfr. Fedeli 2003 p. 15.

<sup>328</sup> Lotito 1974 analyses this second aspect of the poem with a philosophical approach. In *Ex Pont.* 3.1, 151-152 Ovid carefully claims as his only enemy Fate, not the emperor: *tum pete nil aliud saeue nisi ab hoste recedam:/hostem Fortunam sit satis esse mihi.*

Jupiter in heaven; however, the power of the father of the gods, based only on human faith, sanctions in fact the superiority of the earthly counterpart, concrete and verifiable. In the poem, this specification becomes necessary when it applies to Abascantus' mourning (vv. 37-42):

(...) notat ista *deus qui flectit habenas*  
orbis et humanos *propior Iove* digerit actus,  
maerentemque *videt; lectique arcana ministri*  
*hinc etiam documenta capit*, quod diligis umbram  
et colis exsequias. hic est castissimus ardor,  
hic amor a domino meritis censore probari.

Statius openly claims the superiority of the *Iuppiter in terra* over the heavenly one (*propior Iove*), and characterises Domitian with the usual metaphor of the reins of power (*deus qui flectit habenas*), that is so frequent in the *Silvae*. This *topos* is indeed inherited from the Augustan poets, who had already employed it in the encomium for Augustus<sup>329</sup>. What is relevant for Statius, however, is to give a 'political' meaning to the mourning: it becomes in fact evidence (*arcana...documenta*) of the devotion Abascantus is capable of, both to his wife and, mostly, to the emperor<sup>330</sup>. What appears to be mere empathy of the emperor for Abascantus reveals itself to be a test for the officer. The control over the world of the court demonstrates the omniscient presence of Domitian in the poem (vv. 79-83):

(...) *vidit qui cuncta suorum*  
*novit et inspectis ambit latus omne ministris.*  
nec mirum: *videt* ille ortus obitusque, quid auster,  
quid boreas hibernus agat, ferrique togaeque  
consilia atque ipsam mentem probat. (...)

The emperor's look is identified with a divine *videre* (v. 39 *videt*; v. 70 *vidit*; v. 81 *videt*), that still selects his officers according to their merits: it is what Lotito defined as “burocrazia carismatica”<sup>331</sup>. The divine and earthly characterisation of the emperor does not prevent him from still being a symbol of rational power. If the *fortuna* of the officers is, in fact, Domitian, a destiny of death seems to lie outside his responsibility (vv. 143-146):

<sup>329</sup> See e.g. Hor., *Carm.* 3.5, 4-6 *Caelo tonantem credidimus Iovem/regmare: praesens divus habebitur/Augustus (...)*; Ovid, *Tr.* 4.4, 19-20 *Causa tuo exemplo superiorum tuta deorum est, quorum hic aspicitur, creditor ille deus.*

<sup>330</sup> I do not accept here the punctuation of Gibson 2006a ad vv. 39-40: *maerentemque videt, lectique arcana ministri./Hinc etiam documenta capit (...)*. Dividing the adjective *arcana* from *documenta* diminishes the expression *hinc documenta capit* to a simpler “he takes note of your character”. The *iunctura* instead, accepted by Shackleton-Bailey 2003, stresses the deep knowledge of the officers that the emperor can get in a vulnerable moment as the loss of a beloved person.

<sup>331</sup> Lotito 1974, p. 327.

(...) quid enim, quamvis infida levisque,  
**Caesare** tam **dextro** posset Fortuna timeri?  
invenere viam liventia Fata, piumque  
intravit vis saeva larem. (...)

Priscilla's death is not within the boundaries of Domitian's omniscience, thus depriving him of any responsibility. This dichotomy becomes then an effective encomiastic instrument that is employed with the same purpose also by Seneca in a similar situation (*Ad Polyb.* 3, 5):

Facinus indignum! luget Polybius et aliquid **propitio** dolet **Caesare**! Hoc sine dubio, inpotens fortuna, captasti, ut ostenderes neminem contra te ne a Caesare quidem posse defendi.

The emperor ends up representing a hierarchical world where there is no injustice and personal achievements are rewarded: it is the representation of a new *aurea aetas* where there is no space for suffering and death, both symbols of an irrational dimension. In the Statian imagery, Domitian interprets the *logos* theorised by Stoicism, *i. e.* both the cause and guarantee of the cosmic order. The dichotomy existing between Domitian and Fate is stressed by Statius (vv. 164-169):

(...) nunc magni vocat exorabile numen  
Caesaris. heu durus fati tenor! estne quod illi  
non liceat? quanta poterant mortalibus annis  
accessisse morae **si tu, pater, omne teneres**  
**arbitrium**! caeco gerneret Mors clusa barathro  
longius, et vacuae posuissent stamina Parcae.

In the universal idea of the poet, death holds a power equal and opposed to Domitian's, but the two spheres of influence do not meet. If at a first glance this philosophy might seem to diminish the imperial power, in reality it demonstrates its benevolent nature. However, Priscilla's death does not represent the defeat of this power, but rather the freedom from pain (vv. 185-186): *non in te Fatis, non iam caelestibus ullis/arbitrium: mecum ista fero* (...).

In the *silva*, Priscilla's death finds a *raison d'être* in its encomiastic function: the mutual love of the couple is converted in a promise of infinite devotion to the emperor (vv. 186-191):

(...) tu limite coepto  
tende libens sacrumque latus geniumque potentem  
**inrequietus ama**. nunc, quod cupis ipse iuberi,  
da Capitolinis aeternum sedibus aurum,  
quo **niteat** sacri centeno pondere vultus  
Caesaris et **propriae signet cultricis amorem**.



The moderation that distinguishes the relationship and moral code of the life of Abascantus and Priscilla is expressed once again by an oxymoron (v. 41 *castissimus ardor*), that sublimates any erotic connotation for the description of the love relation. On the contrary, the feeling is transformed into a hyperbolic love for the emperor (*irrequietus ama*). About to leave her earthly life, Priscilla is given the duty of casting a light of eternity on the future of the empire, symbolised by the *aeternum aurum* of Domitian. The building of a statue of the emperor is committed to Abascantus, as a *monumentum perennis* of the imperial power and also of the love that Priscilla had for him (*cultricis amorem*). Her premature life is redeemed in the eternal memory of her exemplar life and is a long-distance reply to Abascantus' question at vv. 154-155: *quid probitas aut casta fides, quid numina prosunt/culta deum?* (...).

The final verses sanction the prominence of the imperial encomium. Statius acts as the narrator again and reports the final wish to Abascantus from Priscilla, already from the afterlife (vv. 258-262):

(...) ibi supplice dextra  
*pro te Fata rogat*, reges tibi tristis Averni  
 placat, ut expletis humani finibus aevi  
*pacantem terras dominum iuvenemque relinquit*  
*ipse senex*. (...)

Priscilla's prayer is addressed to the same Fate that has led her to death, showing again the *pietas* that has marked her whole life; the solidity of her *virtus* is reflected in the figure of her husband, imagined in the future as the ideal officer for the emperor. However, Priscilla's appeal, despite being directed to Abascantus, is transformed in the traditional wish for longevity so often employed for the praise of Domitian. The rhetorical purpose is here clear: to link the future of Abascantus to that of Rome (*ipse senex*), disguising the real motivation with a *laudatio principis* (*dominum iuvenem...relinquit*).

An interesting evidence of the vast applicability of the same *topoi* across elegiac and encomiastic language is given by Statius (vv. 127-134):

(...) tecum gelidas comes illa per arctos  
 Sarmaticasque hiemes Histricumque et pallida Rheni  
 frigora, tecum omnes animo durata per aestus  
 et, si castra darent, vellet gestare pharetras,  
 vellet Amazonia latus intercludere pelta,  
 dum te pulverea bellorum nube videret  
 Caesarei prope fulmen equi divinaque tela  
 vibrantem et magnae sparsum sudoribus hastae.

The encomiastic *topos* that in this work has been defined as 'I will follow you till the end of the world', is primarily borrowed from erotic poetry. Among other examples, some are worth mentioning: Prop. 2.26, 29 f. *Heu, mare per longum mea cogitat ire puella,/hanc sequar et fidos una aget aura duos*. Ovid also employs this theme in his elegiac poems, e. g. in *Am.* 2.16, 21 f. *cum domina Libycas ausim perrumpere Syrtes/et dare non aequis vela ferenda Notis* (and also v. 23 f.); and in the *Heroides* : 18, 157 s. *hoc ego dum spectem, Colchos et in ultima Ponti,/quaque viam fecit Thessala pinus, eam* and 13, 163 *me tibi venturam comitem, quocumque vocaris*. The presence of the same motif in the *Panegyricus Messallae* demonstrates how a similar language of praise can in fact be adopted in two apparently very different contexts to show devotion to an influent protector (3.7, 193-196): *pro te vel rapidas ausim maris ire per undas,/dversis hiberna licet tumeant freta ventis,/pro te vel densis solus subsistere turmis/vel parvum Aetnaeae corpus committere flammae*. Virgil also employs it in describing Lycoris in *Ecl.* 10, 22-23. It is Tibullus himself who confirms the use of the *topos* in a non-erotic way in the famous auto-epitaph of 1.3, 55 f. *hic iacet inimiti consumptus morte Tibullus,/Messallam terra dum sequiturque mari*.

Abascantus and Priscilla ideally represent the continuation of what in *Silv.* 1.2 is described *in nuce*. The 'conversion' of the disengaged language of love and elegy for more serious purposes in the *Silvae* starts from Arruntius Stella's wedding. The elegiac past his poetry represents is not rejected, but following Ovid's synthesis, is conveniently transferred to a different social context.

The legitimation of love and the employment of the language of love find an even wider and more complicated expression in imperial praise, where the indirect recipient is the emperor itself. The idealisation of the perfect couple represents, in fact, the clever combination of elegiac and republican models. The emperor emerges as the one responsible for the glory of Rome: the equilibrium that rules the private world of the couple is the same that, in the public and even universal sphere, guarantees the stability of the empire.

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This second chapter of my thesis explored in more detail the terms in which the transfiguration of reality operates in the encomiastic strategy of the *Silvae*. The main aspect that has emerged is the construction of a rhetoric of excess, which permits Statius to enhance the encomium of his addressees. In *Silv.* 4.2 I have analysed how this rhetoric is applied to a direct praise of Domitian as host. The idealized representation of the emperor and the surrounding environment heightens the tones of the encomium by projecting a divine image of Domitian. I have showed how the divinization of the emperor, often interpreted as a tyrannical feature, can be interpreted instead

as the sign of the effective power of Domitian. In this sense, the description of the poet matches the expectations of the public on how an imperial banquet would be. The transfigured reality of the *silva* becomes, in fact, the actual reality of the court. Yet another application of the Senecan idea that false praise is the true sign of an absolute power.

In the analysis of *Silv.* 3.4, I have argued that the encomium is focused on the aestheticisation of power through the portrait of the imperial *delicatus* Earinus. The representation of the young eunuch aims to be a reflection of the emperor, as proved by the employment of specific *topoi* for the imperial encomium, such as luminosity and longevity. I have also showed how the problematic status of Earinus does not compromise the effectiveness of his role as manifestation of the imperial majesty.

In *Silv.* 1.4 the transfiguration of the ideal officer Rutilius Gallicus is based on the association of the addressee's well-being with the safety of the empire. I have examined how Statius builds his encomium of Rutilius Gallicus in a twofold way: on the one hand, he depicts the officer as an important particle of the microcosm of the court, thus heightening Gallicus' role within the logic of the imperial military authority. On the other hand, Statius also associates himself to the recipient in a more personal way. I have examined in fact the presence of elegiac *topoi* in the description of the relationship between the patron and the client. In this way, the transfiguration involves the public and the private sphere in which Gallicus operates.

With the analysis of *Silv.* 1.2 I have examined the transfiguration of the genre of elegy, and the interrelations existing between two men of the empire, their wives and the emperor. The transformation of elegy in a publicly acceptable language of love signals the intention of creating a new model of elegiac poet and of their *dominae* after the Ovidian experimentations. The result of this process is clear: the marriage of the poet Stella and Violentilla represent this 'rite of passage' of elegy. More specifically, the analysis of the figure of Violentilla revealed Statius' intent of creating a new 'paradoxical portrait', balanced between the elegiac *puella* and the Roman *matrona*.

Finally, in the analysis of *Silv.* 5.1 I have focused on the individual representations of Abascantus as the ideal officer, and his wife Priscilla, modeled according to the mixed canon already outlined for Violentilla. I interpreted these figures in association with the ongoing indirect praise of Domitian. I have shown in fact how the transfiguration of the couple and their devotion to the emperor aims to reflect a more general idealization of the imperial microcosm.

### 3. The negotiation of patronage

The third chapter of my thesis will deal with more varied themes represented in the *Silvae*. As the title suggests, my analysis will move from imperial encomium to the more private aspect of the collection, the world of Statius and his friends and patrons. The key-word ‘negotiation’, however, still figures in my approach to these poems, as my aim is to show that the dynamics between the encomiast and his recipients are still based on a mutual exchange of favours. I will discuss in which terms Statius engages in a dialogue with his patrons, and how private forms of encomium differs from the imperial panegyric. We will see how certain formulae of praise will still feature in private context, as a confirmation that such sophisticated language plays a fundamental part in the success of the *Silvae*.

The first poem I will examine is the *epikēdion* of *Silv.* 2.1, composed by Statius for his patron Atedius Melior. In this analysis I will argue that the idealized portrait of Melior’s dead slave Glaucias is idealized according to a specific ethic and aesthetic model. I will also discuss how the transfiguration of the boy is associated with the praise of Melior.

The second poem featured in this chapter is *Silv.* 3.2, a *propemptikon* written for a personal friend of Statius’, Maecius Celer. In this analysis I will focus once again on the employment of elegiac language and *topoi* for the praise of the *laudandus*, and on the self-promotion pursued by the poet.

Finally, the last section will be dedicated to poems dealing with forms of literary patronage. By analysing *Silv.* 1.3, 2.2 and 4.4, I will show how Statius’ praise of literary amateurs is balanced with an association with his own activity; I will also discuss how within this frame Statius is able to promote his role of ‘professional’ poet while celebrating the cultural *otia* of his patrons and friends.

Despite the varied nature of the poems in this chapter, my aim is to show how Statius’ encomiastic strategy operates successfully (and to a certain extent, in similar ways) in private as well as public contexts of praise.

### a. *Silv.* 2.1: *Intempesta cano*: social dynamics, epic models and poetic representation

In a recent volume on the representation of *eros* in the Flavian period, Antonio La Penna<sup>332</sup> selects a few examples of different manifestations of love across the literary genres of epic, epigrammatic and occasional poetry. The common idea lying underneath these new types of portraiture is the desire to idealise the new reality of the empire and the people who live in it. Therefore, the models defined by poets like Statius and Martial appear to combine mixed characteristics inherited from the cultural and literary Roman tradition.

A similar discourse also applies to the representation of a particular category of people, distinguishable for social status and age: the *pueri*, namely boys ranging from childhood to the age of puberty. In the *Silvae* the presence of young men is well displayed, starting from Domitian's *puer delicatus* Earinus in *Silv.* 3.4 to the young *tribunus* Crispinus, praised in *Silv.* 5.2, the unnamed slave of the poet himself in *Silv.* 5.5, and finally the two slaves Glaucias and Philetos, commemorated in the *epikedia* of *Silv.* 2.1 and 2.6 respectively.

These poems on the *pueri* have attracted some interest in the scholarship of the *Silvae*. In particular, the two funerary poems from the second book of the collection have been analysed for the social issues raised by the problematic status of the two young slaves<sup>333</sup>. In this chapter my aim is to bring together all the aspects that have been studied and propose a reading of *Silv.* 2.1 in particular in the light of the encomiastic strategies employed. As a matter of fact, even if the literary genre dictates what the structure and theme of the poems ought to be, nonetheless the ultimate goal for the encomiast is to please the addressee. My aim is in particular to examine how the *puer* Glaucias is portrayed in relation to his surrogate father Melior. I will explain how Statius builds an idealised (and new) image of the characters, and how this aspect legitimates grief in the funerary poems.

For the innovative way in which Statius develops the *epikedia*<sup>334</sup>, the social status of the young slaves is interpreted as the occasion for “the magnification of the subject matter”<sup>335</sup>. The special situation of Glaucias, a *verna* (a home-bred slave, born from freed slaves in Atedius Melior's house) has been identified as the main focus for legitimating the *dominus*' ‘excessive’

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<sup>332</sup> La Penna 2000.

<sup>333</sup> La Penna 2000, pp. 124-127 and 162-168 mentions these examples among the ephebic models developed in the Flavian era. Bernstein 2005 focusses on Glaucias' status and its legitimation within the poem; Asso 2010 explores the dynamics of the relationship between Glaucias and his *dominus* Melior. Van Dam 2006 briefly refers to *Silv.* 2.1 for the epic echoes in it. So does also Gibson 2006b, with an analysis of epic tones in the *propemptikon* for Crispinus (*Silv.* 5.2). For a parallel analysis of how Ausonius expands of themes developed in *Silv.* 2.1 see now Floridi 2012.

<sup>334</sup> On which see Hardie 1983, pp. 109-110 and a few remarks in Markus 2004, pp. 124-130. For a classification of Greek and Latin epitaphs see Lattimore 1942.

<sup>335</sup> Hardie 1983, p. 106.

grief<sup>336</sup>. Therefore, a special attention has been paid to the representation of *dolor* in the *consolationes* and the extraordinary space Statius allots to private and public display of lamentations<sup>337</sup>. A particular aspect that needs special consideration is also the performing dimension of the *epikedia*. The presence of encomia in both poems goes back to the Hellenistic tradition of the genre<sup>338</sup>, and has no comparable examples in Latin literature, where *consolationes* are usually conceived as private *epistulae* (e. g. *Consolatio ad Liviam*). Therefore, I will also draw attention to the combination of private consolation with a more public, ‘professional’ interpretation of the poem and the role of the encomiastic poet.

In the case of our compositions, the description of the exaggerated grief of the *domini* for the death of their young slaves (either home-bred, like Glaucias, or purchased, like Philetos), is justified by the special bond existing within the family frame. As a consequence, the newly legitimised private grief becomes public in the luxurious display of the funerary celebrations.

In this context, what appears to have been neglected or discussed partially seems to me to be the encomiastic function of such a representation of the figures of the *pueri* in relation to their masters. In particular, my aim is to make sense of the presence of peculiar encomiastic hints in the frame of this specific genre. The dramatization of grief and its public display seem to push the boundaries of this genre to an extreme representation of emotional and social chaos<sup>339</sup>. Far from the rational world of the imperial court, the poet releases the natural human reactions to a *mors immatura*. In poems explicitly dedicated to commemorate the premature death of young slaves, Statius manages to create a new ephebic model for them. This innovative praise for the dead and the special bond between the *pueri* and their *domini* leads to a suggestive ‘reflection’ of the first onto the latter, and creates a mirrored encomium of the patron. If one reads the poem in this light, the constant sympathy that the poet shows to the master for his loss also reveals the intention of the encomiast to secure the patron’s favour. The frequent invitations to weep together and to set no boundaries to grief (opposed to the traditional philosophical precepts for *consolationes*<sup>340</sup>) belong to a non-conventional encomiastic use of the *epikedia* as homage to the patron as well as to the deceased.

One could wonder whether *epikedia* written for private patrons differ in some way from poems dedicated to public figures somehow gravitating around the imperial court. The *Silvae* offer a great variety of poems and appear to be illuminating from this point of view. Statius tailors the

<sup>336</sup> Bernstein 2005 and Alston-Spentzou 2011, pp. 88-98.

<sup>337</sup> Especially Markus 2004, with references to Statius’ own epic, and Alston-Spentzou 2011, *ibidem*. See now also Newlands 2012, pp.118-122 on male and female grief.

<sup>338</sup> Hardie 1983, p.110.

<sup>339</sup> This aspect is examined by Alston-Spentzou 2011, pp. 96-98.

<sup>340</sup> Cfr. Baltussen 2009, pp. 78-82.

funerary poem to the addressee, and this aspect can be seen in the application of two specific *topoi* of the genre: the display of grief and the meaning given to death. I will focus in particular on the comparison with *Silv.* 5.1, where we have seen the poet makes sense of the loss and sets boundaries to Abascantus' *dolor* for the public position he holds in the imperial court. As we have seen, in this poem Statius sets the boundaries of Abascantus' grief in the light of his public role: upon his future depends the destiny of Rome.<sup>341</sup>

What happens when the *consolatio* is addressed to a private figure? Is there any limit to grief? The inferior status of the young boys in the poems could represent the only impediment, but scholars have thoroughly demonstrated how Statius gets around this issue by heightening the master/slave relationship to a father/son-like one (with hints to homoeroticism in *Silv.* 2.1)<sup>342</sup>. Therefore, it is not surprising that Statius often invites the patron to weep freely (2.1, 14 *nemo vetat*; 34 *nec te lugere severus/arceo*; 2.6, 1-2 *saeve nimis, lacrimis quisquis discrimina ponis/lugendique modos!*; 12-13 *ne comprime fletus/ne pudeat*;) and share his grief (2.1, 17-18 *lacrimis en et mea carmine in ipso/ora natant tristesque cadunt in verba liturae*; 28-29 *crudi comitem sociumque doloris,/si merui luctusque tui consortia sensi*; 35 *confer gemitus pariterque fleamus*; 2.6, 14-15 (*ei mihi, subdo/ipse faces*); 93-94 *quid terga, dolori,/ Urse, damus?*)<sup>343</sup>.

Paternal and allusive homoerotic love is not the only rhetorical transfiguration Statius employs to justify the addressee's mourning. The representation of the boys aims specifically to deliver a new idealised ethic and aesthetic model that is a reflection of the *patroni* themselves. As a consequence, it will become apparent how the deep bond between the masters and their slaves means more than a way to legitimate an excessive grief for an inferior: the idealisation of the *puer* conveys also an indirect praise of the *patronus*, as it emerges clearly from a passage from *Silv.* 2.6, 52-53: *...tecum tristisque hilarisque nec umquam/illem suus, vultumque tuo sumebat ab ore*.<sup>344</sup>

The progressive idealisation of social relationships seems to be more and more a distinctive trait of Flavian culture. In the *Silvae*, the language of *amor* and *amicitia* employed aims to convey the illusion of a society of equals. According to this line of interpretation, *Silv.* 2.1 and 2.6 make no exception, with the attempt to portray an ideal situation of love and affection within the Roman *domus* that knows no social boundaries. It is easy to recognise the employment of the same encomiastic strategy used for imperial praise, that can be summarised with an equation: patrons like Atedius Melior and Flavius Ursus are depicted as idealised paternal figures, in the same way as in the bigger scale Domitian is imagined (more literally than ever before) as a *pater* for his subjects.

<sup>341</sup> A similar discourse (with philosophical hints) is exploited by Lotito 1974 about *Silv.* 5.1 and 3.3.

<sup>342</sup> Asso 2010.

<sup>343</sup> The idea of grief as an exceptional occasion for weeping freely is already present in Horace, *Carm.* 1.24.

<sup>344</sup> The encomiastic strategy is the same employed for the praise of Domitian in *Silv.* 3.4 through the idealised portrait of Earinus, but with substantial differences that I will make clear in the present chapter.

The inclusion of *epikedia* in a collection of poems some time after their actual delivery will appear more effective, if one reads beyond the simple *consolatio*. It could be said that these poems in fact change their *raison d'être* with the publication: from immediate responses to the loss, they change their function and become testaments of a broader praise<sup>345</sup>. However, oddly enough, Statius seems to resist talking about the process of writing, and claims instead a prompt composition and delivery of his poems.<sup>346</sup> The presence of encomiastic hints and a new portrait of the society of the Flavian era are the clear signs of the interest, novelty and complexity of the *Silvae* not only as a literary production, but also as a social document.

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From the very first verses of the poem, Statius defines the relationship existing between Melior and Glaucias by calling the boy *alumnus* (v. 1 *alumni*)<sup>347</sup> and therefore establishing the fostering role of Melior. The first part of the *silva* outlines the patron's grief and the poet participation (vv. 1-35). The funeral procession is also described as a display of excessive *dolor* that is shared by Statius himself and the whole city (17-25):

(...) lacrimis en et mea carmine in ipso  
 ora natant tristesque cadunt in verba liturae.  
*ipse* etenim *tecum* nigrae sollemnia pompae  
*spectatumque Urbi* scelus et *puerile feretrum*  
*produxi*; saevos damnati turis acervos  
 plorantemque animam supra sua funera *vidi*,  
*teque patrum gemitus superantem et bracchia matrum*  
*complexumque rogos ignemque haurire parantem*  
*vix tenui similis comes offendique tenendo.*

The public dimension of the *lamentatio* sets the tones of the poem, balanced between the intimate loss of Melior and the grandeur of the funeral. This combination has been connected directly to public funerary speeches of Greek tradition<sup>348</sup>, and seems to represent quite a unique synthesis in Latin literature. The main feature of the public aspect of Melior's *consolatio* is represented in

<sup>345</sup> Newlands 2011, p. 61 *ad l.* 11-12 recalls how *Silv.* 2.1 was published around two years after Glaucias' death, and *Silv.* 5.1 at least one year after Priscilla's death. A similar statement on the encomiastic value of funerary speeches pronounced long after the event is made by Menander Rhetor at 419. 1-3.

<sup>346</sup> As often stated in the *epistulae praefatoriae* opening the books. On the 'oral' character in the *Silvae* see Coleman 2008, p. 30.

<sup>347</sup> The title of the *silva* defines Glaucias *Atedi Melioris delicatus*, but the titles in the collection are probably a later addition. On this see Coleman 1988, pp. xxviii-xxxii and specifically on book 2 Van Dam 1984, pp. 69-73. Asso 2010, p. 676, n. 42 remarks how ancient readers and commentators still interpreted these poems as dedicated to *pueri delicati*.

<sup>348</sup> Hardie 1983, pp. 103-110, focussed especially on *Silv.* 2.6.



particular by the presence of Glaucias' encomium, which occupies twenty lines of the poem (vv. 36-55):

iamdudum dignos aditus laudumque tuarum,  
o merito dilecte puer, primordia quaerens  
distrahor. hinc anni stantes in limine vitae  
ac me *forma* rapit, rapit inde *modestia praecox*  
*et pudor et tenero probitas maturior aevo.*  
*o ubi purpureo suffusus sanguine candor*  
*sidereiue orbes radiataque lumina caelo*  
*et castigatae collecta modestia frontis*  
*ingenuique super crines mollisque decorae*  
*margo comae? blandis ubinam ora arguta querelis*  
*osculaue impliciti vernos redolentia flores*  
*et mixtae risu lacrimae penitusque loquentis*  
*Hyblaeis vox †mixta† favis*, cui sibila serpens  
poneret et saevae vellent servire novercae ?  
nil veris affingo bonis. heu lactea colla  
bracchiaue <et> numquam domini sine pondere cervix!  
*o ubi venturae spes non longinqua iuventae*  
*atque genis optatus honos iurataque multum*  
*barba tibi?* cuncta in cineres gravis intulit hora  
hostilisque dies; nobis meminisse relictum.

The description of Glaucias is outlined as a combination of aesthetic and ethic qualities deeply intertwined, hence Statius declares not to know where to begin the praise (*primordia quaerens/distrahor*). The moral qualities ascribed to the young boy represent the standard virtues in the encomia of the dead, but in the *Silvae* they also acquire a symbolic meaning of ideal behaviour. Therefore, the *forma* is closely associated to *modestia*, *pudor* and *probitas* (vv. 39-40). One cannot fail to notice that these were also the virtues of the deceased Priscilla commemorated in *Silv.* 5.1, 51-53: *laudantur proavis seu pulchrae munere formae/quae morum caruere bonis, falsaeque potentes/laudis egent verae*. Therefore, the model proposed is the ideal combination of natural beauty and manners. This feature is confirmed by the funerary epigrams Martial also dedicates to Glaucias (6.28, 6-7): *castus moribus, integer pudore,/velox ingenio, decore felix*. In 6.29, 5-6 the poet remarks the coexistence of natural beauty and moral integrity: *moribus hoc formaeque datum: quis blandior illo?/Aut quis Apollineo pulchrior ore fuit?*. The hyperbolic twist in *Silv.* 2.1 is of course the young age of the *laudandus*. The *topos* of precocity represents a standard for the untimely dead, but it also applies more specifically to the imagery of the *pueri*<sup>349</sup>.

<sup>349</sup> As pointed out by Sanna 2008, p. 197-198, n. 9.

In *Silv.* 2.1 the representation of Glaucias as a *puer* recalls a whole series of models that contribute to shape his figure. As Antonio La Penna has argued<sup>350</sup>, the ephebic models developed in epic poetry show their influence in representations of *pueri*<sup>351</sup> even in other literary genres. However, the portrait of Glaucias seems to owe borrowings from epic *Heldenknaben* as well as from the *puellae* of amatory contexts<sup>352</sup>.

The intertextual presence of these models emerges in the physical description of Glaucias, firstly in the combination of rosy cheeks and white skin (*purpureo suffusus sanguine candor*). Precedents of a similar form of beauty can in fact be found in love poetry, like in Ovid, *Am.* 3.3, 5-6 *candida candorem roseo suffuse rubore/ante fuit: niveo lucet in ore rubor*, where the poet complains about a *puella* who has abandoned him but not ceased to show on her face the signs of love. The presence of a light red flush on the cheeks marks the combination of natural beauty and modest manners, as it is the case of Daphne in the *Metamorphoses* (1. 484): *pulchra verecundo subfuderat ora rubore*. What in fact seems to be a specific feminine trait finds vast applications also in epic contexts, and in particular also in descriptions of young men, possibly *pueri*. Statius appears to be reminded of his own epic works, where the figures of the young Parthenopaeus (in the *Thebaid*) and Achilles (in the *Achilleid*) complete the portrait of Glaucias.

In the description of the ephebe in the *Thebaid*, his youth is accentuated as the main reason for the unsuitability for war, the most evident sign being the absence of the beard (4. 274): *dulce rubens viridique genas spectabilis aevo*. As one can see, the first physical trait ascribed to Glaucias already hints at the complex image Statius constructs: a model of young beauty ideally balanced between masculine and feminine traits, but combined with a behaviour suitable for an older age (v. 40): *tenero probitas maturior aevo*. In this idealisation, Glaucias surpasses his epic alter ego, whose youthful beauty is an obstacle to his personal achievements. This is first stated by the poet, who aims to portray Parthenopaeus as too young for any military action (*Theb.* 4. 251-253):

pulchrrior haud ulli triste ad discrimen ituro  
Vultus et egregiae tanta indulgentia formae:  
nec desunt animi, veniat modo fortior aetas.

The boy's mother Atalanta confirms it when she tries to persuade the boy not to go to war (*Theb.* 4. 335-337):

expecta, dum maior honos, dum firmius aevum,

<sup>350</sup> La Penna 2000, pp. 67-168.

<sup>351</sup> On the ephebic figures in Statius' epics see more recently also Sanna 2008, pp. 195-214.

<sup>352</sup> La Penna 2000, *ibidem* and Asso 2010 have analysed these influences in the poem, but separately.

dum roseis venit umbra genis vultusque recedunt  
ore mei; (...)

The physical trait of the rosy cheeks still free from the first beard is therefore interpreted in a twofold way: in epic, it marks immaturity and recklessness, whereas in the encomiastic frame of the *consolatio*, it is combined with a wisdom that goes beyond the years. If such an idealisation of people who died young is traditional<sup>353</sup>, on the other hand Statius' intertextual reference suggests an ameliorated version of the ephebic model in the successful synthesis of the beauty and modesty of Glaucias.

A couple of other comparisons will make this point more clear. The peculiar representation of ephebic beauty softened by delicate traits is typical also of the young warrior Hippolytus, seen through the eyes of Phaedra, in *Heroides* (4, 72-76):

flava verecundus tinxerat ora rubor,  
quemque vocant aliae vultum rigidumque trucemque,  
pro rigido Phaedra iudice fortis erat.  
Sint procul a nobis iuvenes ut femina compti:  
fine coli modico forma virilis amat.

In this passage, Phaedra's love for the young boy contributes to the idealisation of his contrasting complexion. However, the poet is careful in allowing 'modest limits' to manly beauty. Phaedra seems to apply the traditional canon of *forma* as a balance between inner nature and exterior gracefulness.

The second example comes again from Statius' epic, and it involves another traditional heroic and masculine character, Achilles, who under extraordinary circumstances finds himself in the position of disguising his very nature. The scene portrays the nymph Tethis trying to fashion his son as a woman, in order to disguise him among Lycomedes' daughters (*Ach.* 1, 335-337):

nec luctata diu; superest num plurimus illi  
invita virtute decor, fallitque tuentes  
ambiguus tenuique latens discrimine sexus.

Glaucias enjoys illustrious models of heroic *virtus* and aesthetic beauty. In the *silva*, the specific warlike *virtus* of Parthenopaeus, Hippolytus and Achilles<sup>354</sup> is replaced by a general good disposition and modest manners, and the scenario is switched from the battle camp to the quiet environment of Melior's house. There is more in the encomium of the deceased slave than

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<sup>353</sup> Newlands 2011, p. 77 *ad v.* 40.

<sup>354</sup> On these ephebic figures see again Sanna 2008. On gender and the *Achilleid* see Heslin 2005.

traditional *consolationes* prescribe. The description of Glaucias' physical details continues with the mention of the eyes, the smooth face and the soft hair. The encomiastic *topos* of the eyes shining like stars or the sun is traditionally employed in love poetry for the praise of the beloved<sup>355</sup>, but it can also be found in contexts of imperial eulogy. In *Silv.* 1.1, 103-104, the poet in fact describes the eyes of the equestrian statue of Domitian as similar to shining stars: *tua sidereas imitantia flammis/lumina contempto mallet Rhodos aspera Phoebos*. Interestingly, in a reference to the same statue and its comparison to the colossus of Rhodes, Martial employs the same rare use of *radiatus* as in our *silva* (*Epigr.* 1, 70, 7-8): *nec te detineat miri radiata colossi/quae Rhodium moles vincere gaudet opus*. In addition to that, it is possible to find the same light *topos* applied to other ephebic figures, like Parthenopaeus again, described in the act of taking off his helmet (*Theb.* 9. 699-706):

(...) Ast ubi pugnae  
cassis anhela calet, resoluta uertice nudus  
exoritur: **tunc dulce comae radiisque trementes**  
**dulce nitent uisus** et, quas dolet ipse morari,  
nondum mutatae rosea lanugine malae.  
Nec formae sibi laude placet multumque seueris  
asperat ora minis, sed frontis seruat honorem  
ira decens. (...)

The young hero's beauty is heightened by the sun rays, as it is for Glaucias, if one reads the rare *radiata* in the *silva* as a passive, in subjunction with *caelo* ['shown in (his) radiance by heaven']<sup>356</sup>. Glaucias seems to surpass his epic model again, as the sunlight unveils Parthenopaeus' young age (*quas dolet ipse morari, nondum mutatae rosea lanugine malae*), whereas in the *silva* the theme of the light enhances Glaucias' eulogy.

A direct reference to Parthenopaeus is also present in the passage describing Philetos according to the same standards (*Silv.* 2.6, 38-45): *non tibi femineum vultu decus oraque supra/mollis honos, qualis dubiae post crimina formae/de sexu transire iubent: torva atque virilis/gratia; nec petulans acies, blandique severo/igne oculi, qualis bellis iam casside, visu/Parthenopaeus erat; simplexque horrore decoro/crinis, et obsessae nondum primoque micantes/flore genae* (...). Once again, the comparison with the epic model highlights the combination of young age and masculine vigor.

<sup>355</sup> E. g. Ovid, *Am.* 3.3, 9 *radiant ut sidus ocelli* and Prop. 2.3, 14 *oculi, geminae, sidera nostra, faces*. In the *Metamorphoses* Ovid plays with the double meaning of *lumina* ('light' and 'eyes') when talking about the Sun: (...) *quid nunc, Hyperione nate,/forma colorque tibi radiataque lumina prosunt?*. For other examples see Newlands 2011, p. 77, *ad v.* 42 and Asso 2010, pp. 671-672.

<sup>356</sup> Newlands 2011, p. 78 *ad v.* 42 proposes a suggestive hyperbolic translation of this difficult passage: 'furnished with rays by heaven', "with an active sense of radiate deduced from the passive – Glaucias' eyes are beautifully radiant like the sun and stars."

In the following lines, Statius insists on the felicitous combination of moderation and ephebic beauty in Glaucias. *Modestia* is repeated twice in the space of six lines, and hints to the boy's morality intertwined with physical details. In verse 43, the poet directly infers Glaucias' modesty from the clear forehead, sign of his young age (*castigatae collecta modestia frontis*). Again, a comparison with Parthenopaeus can be mentioned here. As I have said previously, in the scene where the *puer* takes his helmet off, his beauty is revealed unexpectedly; the ephebe tries to conceal his young age by assuming a fierce expression, which however fails to hide his gracious complexion (*Theb.* 9, 704-706):

nec formae sibi laude placet multumque severis  
asperat ora minis, sed frontis servat honorem  
ira decens. (...)

In both the ephebic models proposed by Statius, the *frons* of the *pueri* symbolises a combination of actual youth and more artificial manners, unusual for children of that age: modesty (Glaucias) and anger (Parthenopaeus). The different destiny of the *pueri* in their respective poems marks the effectiveness of such behaviour: an idealised quality for Glaucias, a deadly pretension for Parthenopaeus.

Two other epic parallels are worth mentioning in this context of young beauty and inadequacy to war. The figures of Pollux in Valerius Flaccus<sup>357</sup> and Alcidas again in the *Thebaid* are also victims of fierce enemies because of their combination of shining beauty and precocious features. As Lorenzo Sanna<sup>358</sup> argues, “the boy's beauty and frailty are plainly inadequate, ‘out of place’, and must be eliminated, disfigured by those who, in the boxing match, have the role of the *ferus* warrior, the enemy of the boy-hero on the battlefield”. The two passages quoted by the scholar show how in the epic poems the ideal beauty represented by the *pueri* need to be annihilated by the physical destruction of their bodies (V. Fl. 4, 240-243 and *Theb.* 6, 819-822):

quisquis es, infelix celeras puer: haud tibi pulchrae  
manserit hoc ultra frontis decus orave matri  
nota feres. Tune a sociis electus iniquis?  
Tune Amycis moriere manu?

(...) non has ego pulvere crasso  
atque cruore genas, metuit quibus ista iuventa  
semiviri, foedem, mittamque informe sepulcro  
corpus et Oebalio donem lugere magistro?

<sup>357</sup> For the dating of Valerius Flaccus, see Stover 2008.

<sup>358</sup> Sanna 2008, p. 198.

The mention of the dismembered body appears to be pivotal in both passages, and creates an interesting parallel for Glaucias, whose body remains inviolate after death (*Silv.* 2.1, 154-157):

gratum est, Fata, tamen quod non mors lenta iacentis  
exedit puerile decus, manesque subibit  
integer et nullo temeratus corpora damno,  
qualis erat. (...)

Glaucias surpasses his intertextual epic models also in the very moment of his death, where his beauty is preserved as it was in real life, as remarked by the *enjambement*. The ephebic beauty that is fatal for the epic *pueri* and ends with their deaths is ideally eternised in Glaucias.

In addition to these aspects, the aesthetic dimension of Glaucias' portrait is not neglected in its erotic undertones. Statius dedicates a hexameter to the description of the boy's redolent lips (v. 46 *osculaue impliciti vernos redolentia flores*). The idea reprises quite closely a characteristic of the *puer delicatus*<sup>359</sup>, without necessarily implying that Glaucias and Melior's relationship had a homoerotic connotation. Scholars seem to be uncertain about this particular aspect of Glaucias' role, and arguing if the master/slave relationship was actually more than a foster one seems unavoidable<sup>360</sup>.

The mention of the *oscula* (which here means more than simply 'lips'<sup>361</sup>, rather 'little kisses') in relation to Glaucias is essential, as it recalls the type of the *puer delicatus* as we find it so often in Martial, who dedicates a few epigrams to elaborated lists of fragrances exhaled by the *pueri*'s kisses (*Epigr.* 3.65; 10.42; 11.26). If the attention to the senses' suggestion is fairly similar in the two poets, what is lacking in the *silva* is the playful amorous struggle for kisses.

Martial introduces this elegiac *topos* and shows his preference for a troubling relationship with his *pueri*, rather than a remissive display of affection. La Penna<sup>362</sup> quotes a few examples from the collection, which show how the playful and cruel erotic game known from elegy is also applied to the master/slave frame. A special mention is reserved for sought-after kisses, as in 5.46, 1-2:

Basia dum nolo nis quae lunctantia carpsi  
et placet ira mihi plus tua quam facies

The poet enjoys a reluctant boy reminiscing of the elegiac *dura puella*; the passion for what eludes him is stated again in a more convoluted distich (5.83):

<sup>359</sup> Asso 2010, p. 672 and La Penna 2000, p. 118.

<sup>360</sup> Van Dam 1984, pp. 72-73, 105, on lines 62-63 and Shackleton-Bailey 2003, p. 108, n. 8 argue against a sexual relationship, whilst Asso 2010 does not deny this possibility and explores the erotic frame of it.

<sup>361</sup> *Sic* Shackleton-Bailey 2003.

<sup>362</sup> La Penna 2000, pp. 118-119.

Insequeris, fugio; fugis, insequor; haec mihi mens est:  
velle tuum nolo, Dindyme, nolle volo.

Pliancy is not contemplated in the erotic frame between the master and his *puer delicatus*; the elegiac game pursued by Martial shows how the aesthetic appearance of the boy is not necessarily accompanied by moral integrity or even *pudicitia*. Another epigram shows what the poet ideally looks for (4.42, 5-12):

Sit nive candidior: namque in Mareotide fusca  
*pulchrior est quanto rarius iste color.*  
*Lumina sideribus certent mollesque flagellent*  
*colla comae:* tortas non amo, Flacce, comas.  
*Frons brevis* atque modus leviter sit naribus uncis,  
*Paestanis rubeant aemula labra rosis.*  
*Saepe et nolentem cogat nolitque volentem,*  
*liberior domino saepe sit ille suo;*

The physical characteristics of the ideal *puer delicatus* are the usual ones (white skin, eyes competing with the stars, soft hair, modest forehead, red lips), but they are followed by a specific behaviour: the *puer* needs to know how to argue and say no, in patent opposition to his *dominus* (*liberior domino*). Statius' idealisation of Glaucias as a reflection of Melior's upbringing appears to counteract this particular image offered in the epigrammatic context.

In another epigram of Martial, the poet states that what he looks for are the elegiac torments of love (*Ep.* 12. 75, 6-8):

horum delicias superbiamque  
et fastus querulos, Avite, malo  
quam dotis mihi quinquies ducena.

The *pueri* described in these epigrams are very distant from the idealised portrait of Glaucias in *Silv.* 2.1. The comparison reveals how Melior's boy is distant from this characterisation, with allusive differences. Glaucias' *oscula...vernos redolentia flores* are not obtained with any struggle or fight, as suggested by the participle *impliciti* ('when embraced'). The childish complaints coming from Glaucias are defined *blandis...querelis*, as meant to combine the elegiac motif of the *querela*<sup>363</sup> with children's complaints. In this context, the adjective *blandus* not only refers to children's winsomeness<sup>364</sup>, but could also hint at Glaucias' docile disposition towards Melior. The encomiastic

<sup>363</sup> Worth mentioning at least Tib. 3.4, 75.

<sup>364</sup> Newlands 2011, p. 78 *ad loc.*

operation performed by Statius follows a trend that one can trace in the whole collection, and that has a relevant precedent in *Silv.* 1.2. In the epithalamium for Stella and Violentilla, I have shown how the poet narrates the passage from the elegiac past to the reality of marriage, and portrays the couple as the perfect combination of *forma* and *decus*, beauty and morality. This ideal duplicity is particularly achieved in the description of Violentilla, who displays the successful reunion of the models of *puella* and *matrona* (vv. 106-122).

I think Statius' intent with Glaucias is not too different: to create an idealised portrait of the deceased boy with a clever combination of suitable models, appropriately 'ameliorated', such as the epic *Heldenknaben* and the *pueri delicati*. Regarding the latter, Statius borrows specific aesthetic characteristics (such as the redolent kisses and the complaints) but combines them with a strong moral profile that the original models are lacking.

There is no sign of tension in the relationship between Melior and Glaucias: the boy's charming persuasiveness is confirmed by mythical comparisons (vv. 48-49) that nonetheless do not overshadow Glaucias' genuine qualities (*nil veris affingo bonis*). His charm is never as lascivious as in Martial, but carefully balanced between the suggestive beauty of a *puer delicatus* and the innocence of a child.

The particular of the milk-white throat also represents a typical sign of ephebic beauty, as it can be found in the description of young male figures: Ascanius (*Aen.* 10, 137 *cervix...lactea*) Narcissus (*Met.* 3, 422 *eburnea colla*) and in another epigram of Martial dedicated to a *delicatus* (1.31, 6 *lactea colla*). The *exempla* to which the *iunctura* alludes stress again Glaucias' perfect beauty.

So far, it is legitimate to acknowledge a certain level of ambiguity in the description of Glaucias, which seems to owe more than one aspect to the figure of the *puer delicatus*. However difficult it is to determine the limit of Glaucias' role, Statius seems to cast away doubts about a sexual connotation of the boy's relationship with Melior. The poet says (vv. 52-54):

O ubi venturae spes non longinqua iuventae  
atque genis optatus honos iurataque multum  
barba tibi ? (...)

Carole Newlands rightly comments that "the desirability of Glaucias' first beard argues against a sexual relationship between him and Melior – in a pederastic relationship the beard marked the end of a boy's physical attractiveness"<sup>365</sup>. These lines are revealing in the light of the *consolatio*, and show a trend that the poem shares with other types of occasional compositions in the *Silvae*. The

<sup>365</sup> Newlands 2011, p. 80 *ad v.* 53. Against a sexual connotation of the relationship are also her remarks in Newlands 2006.



regret for Glaucias' manhood seems to confirm his specific role as a possible heir for Melior, and justifies the foster father's grief. Therefore, if Glaucias seems explicitly not to play the role of a *delicatus* within Melior's house, one could wonder why Statius chose to confer to him so many physical characteristics of this category. Paolo Asso argues that Glaucias' description could hint at an erotic dimension of the fostering relationship<sup>366</sup>, but I believe the association of the boy with the type of the *puer delicatus* mostly serves an aesthetic purpose in the consolatory/encomiastic frame. As I argued before, Glaucias lacks some features typical of the *delicati* (disdain, complaints, vanity), and his changeable emotions (v. 47 *mixtae risu lacrimae*<sup>367</sup>) are mostly ascribed to the young age.

As I also showed, Statius gets back to the ephebic models of his epic poems, in order to give to Glaucias a more virile and heroic depth. The longed-for beard (v. 53 *genis optatus honos*) symbolically represents an ideal passage from the delicate beauty of a *puer* to manhood, the same that is negated to Glaucias' epic counterpart, Parthenopaeus.

In addition to that, the eternal beauty is in fact the main feature of the *puer delicatus par excellence* in the *Silvae*, Earinus. As I have analysed in *Silv.* 3.4, the position of the eunuch at the court of Domitian is the reflection of the eternity of Rome, frozen in his youthful beauty. It will become apparent how Earinus fulfils a purely aesthetic role, symbolised at its best by the image of the mirror (*Silv.* 3.4, 98 ...*speculum reclusit imagine rapta*).

Therefore, what emerges in the representation of the Statian *pueri* is a new combination of ephebic beauty and heroic excellence: an aesthetic and ethical sublimation. The idealisation of the beauty and morality of the deceased in a funerary speech is not a novelty *per se*<sup>368</sup>, but in the fostering frame it acquires a specific meaning. An idealised portrait of Glaucias is necessary for two main reasons: firstly, to justify Melior's boundless grief for the loss of a slave, and secondly, to heighten the boy's status of adoptive son, which Statius remarks later at vv. 76-81. The latter aspect is particularly relevant in the construction of an indirect reflection of Glaucias' qualities on Melior.

This aspect returns also in more open terms in *Silv.* 2.6 about Philetos and Flavius Ursus (vv. 34-37): *qualis eras, procul en cunctis puerisque virisque/pulchrior et tantum domino minor! illius unus/ante decor, quantum praecedit clara minores/luna faces quantumque alios premit Hesperos ignes*. The indirect encomium of the patron finds its way through the eulogy of the *puer*. Therefore, Statius innovates in two ways: by including a specific encomium of the dead, usually not necessarily present in Roman consolations, and through this, by delivering also a praise of the

<sup>366</sup> Asso 2010, *passim*.

<sup>367</sup> With Newlands 2011, p. 78 *ad loc*.

<sup>368</sup> Menader Rhetor, 420.10: τεμείς δὲ τὴν φύσιν δίχα, εἷς τε τὸ τοῦ σώματος κάλλος, ὅπερ πρῶτον ἐρεῖς, εἷς τε τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς εὐφροῖαν.

addressee. It will appear clear now how the servile status of Glaucias and Philetos is also legitimized as the ideal condition for presenting the fostering figures as public role models. The ‘universalisation’ of Flavius Ursus’ and Atedius Melior’s actions is clearly stated by Statius in both poems (*Silv.* 2.1, 82-88 *fas mihi sanctorum venia dixisse parentum,/tuque, oro, Natura, sinas, cui prima per orbem/iura animis sancire datum: non omnia sanguis/proximus aut serie generis demissa propago/alligat; interius nova saepe adscitaque serpunt/pignora conexis. natos genuisse necesse est,/elegisse iuvat...*; *Silv.* 2.6, 6-8 *...ad te tamen at procul intrat/altius in sensus maioraque vulnera vincit/plaga minor...*).

After exploiting the physical and moral qualities of Glaucias, Statius dedicates a pathetic passage to remembering some real-life moments exchanged between him and Melior (vv. 56-66):

Quis tua colloquiis hilaris mulcebit amatis  
pectora? quis curas mentisque arcana remittet?  
accensum quis bile fera famulisque tumentem  
leniet ardentique in se deflectet ab ira?  
inceptas quis ab ore dapes libataque uina  
auferet et dulci turbabit cuncta rapina?  
quis matutinos abrumpet murmure somnos  
impositus stratis, abitusque morabitur artis  
nexibus atque ipso reuocabit ad oscula poste?  
obvius intranti rursus quis in ora manusque  
prosiliet breuibisque umeros circumdabit ulnis?

The scenes recalled offer some insight into the construction of the master-slave relationship. Statius seems to play deliberately with a certain ambiguity in displaying the affection between Melior and Glaucias, as the scenes seem to evoke images that could be interpreted both within the erotic and fostering frame<sup>369</sup>. The ambiguity of the language, for which it is difficult to set boundaries to the affection shared by Glaucias and his master, might indeed be a signal of a specific encomiastic strategy, aimed to portray an ideal relationship. In other words, what Statius suggests here is an idea of absolute love, which combines the intimacy of playful games with the sincerity of the sentiment.

Moreover, Glaucias plays another important role in the relationship with Melior: a rational force that balances the master’s life. In a philosophical sense, Glaucias’ charm works on different levels in the relationship, inspiring not only love, but also a more general inner equilibrium. In this way, Glaucias’ love loses a possible negative connotation of the erotic suggestions, and distinguishes itself from other potential models of erotic love, such as the *pueri delicati* of Martial or the *dura puella* of the elegiacs. Again, Statius offers a different portrait of Glaucias, who is able

<sup>369</sup> Asso 2010, pp. 673-674 and Newlands 2011, pp. 81-83 respectively. The two spheres nonetheless share some common *topoi* like the embraces and kisses.

to love his master without incurring the unpleasant troubles of lovers. The philosophical connotation of the *puer* as a protection for Melior from negative forces like anger and preoccupations is clear in the passage (vv. 56-59), and confirms the complex role played by Glaucias within the encomiastic description of the social dynamics of the household.

The representation of the *puer* as the embodiment of rationality in Melior's life goes beyond the character's idealisation in *epikedia*, and unveils a capital aspect of the *Silvae* as a cultural product. Significantly, the absence of conflict that permeates the whole collection is also obtained by a constant annihilation of negative forces which are confined to the mythological *exempla*. Therefore, Statius dedicates a special attention to the people gravitating around the court, and aims to portray figures with official duties as indispensable little components of the big imperial machine. If in the public sphere, figures like Abascantus (*Silv.* 5.1) and the father of Claudius Etruscus (*Silv.* 3.3)<sup>370</sup> represent the perfect examples of the court officer, I believe the figures of slaves like Glaucias play a similar role in the private setting of the household.

The stability attributed to the figures of the imperial officers, who undergo a proper standardisation (often paradoxical), has a precise function in the imperial era. The rationalising force represented by these characters acts as a form of control on the autocratic power of the emperor. The description of their duties is nevertheless perceived as a form of religious *obsequium*<sup>371</sup> that is consistent with the increasing perception of the emperor as a celestial *numen*.

Even if religious tones of devotion are missing in *Silv.* 2.1, nevertheless Glaucias undergoes a similar idealisation as the imperial officers in acting as a form of balance and protection for Melior. Besides the philosophical suggestions, it is my belief that here one could also see the way in which the poet engages with overlapping erotic and paternal tones<sup>372</sup>, but sets specific limitations to them. In a way, the moderate but still playful relationship that Glaucias and Melior share is another example of a paradox similar to the one incarnated by Stella and Violentilla in *Silv.* 1.2, where elegiac love is 'promoted' to the new reality of marriage. Similarly, Statius portrays Glaucias as an ideal companion, who is able to love, delight, entertain, comfort, soothe and appease his master. It is easy to see how such a representation of Glaucias in the love frame is more than an ambiguous overlapping of erotic and fostering language. Like Priscilla in *Silv.* 5.1, the *puer* is an ideal combination of beauty, manners and devotion. This similarity is confirmed by the vocabulary employed in both poems: *forma*, *modestia*, *pudor*, *probitas* (2.1, 39-40) and *colloquiis hilaris* (56) for Glaucias, *hilaris...fides* and *mixta pudori gratia* (5.1, 65-66) for Priscilla.

<sup>370</sup> Analysed with great perspicacity in a cultural and philosophical context by Lotito 1974.

<sup>371</sup> See e. g. *Silv.* 3.3. 64-66 (...) *semperque gradi prope numina, semper/Caesareum coluisse latus sacrisque deorum/arcanis haerere datum.* (...)

<sup>372</sup> Sic Asso 2010, pp. 673-674 and Newlands 2011, p. 81.

The poet's intention to create a similar idealised model becomes evident if one looks at the social status of the two characters. Priscilla can boast a noble family lineage (5.1, 53 *tibi...origo niteret*) whereas Glaucias cannot completely free himself from his humble origins, despite Statius' efforts to stress the fortunate circumstances of his birth (2.1, 76-78 *hic domus, hic hortus...nec quaerere genus*). Despite the difference of status, the two figures find a similar idealisation *post mortem*, carefully balanced between solid morality and light-heartedness.

However, even if the eulogy of the deceased is traditional in the *epikedia*, yet in the two poems it appears to have a different function. Drawing a parallel analysis of *Silv.* 2.1 and 5.1 can in fact be productive in this context, as it shows how Statius manages to adapt the literary genre to encomiastic purposes.

The boundless manifestation of grief that Statius grants to Melior in *Silv.* 2.1 is limited for Abascantus in *Silv.* 5.1. In the latter, in fact, invitations to placate the *dolor* can be found throughout the whole poem, and mostly interpreted as an act of loyalty to the emperor (37-42; 205-208). The political dimension of Abascantus' grief leads to a political representation of the *epikedia* itself.

In *Silv.* 2.1, Statius seems to set boundaries to Melior's mourning just towards the end of the poem (183), whilst he encourages his addressee to weep freely much more extensively elsewhere (14; 17-18; 28-29; 34).

In addition to that, the traditional consolatory motif of the better life the deceased enjoy in Elysium is interpreted yet again with a political twist in *Silv.* 5.1. The traditional consolation of a safe environment for Priscilla in the afterlife (vv. 247 ff.) is in fact followed by a less usual reassurance that she will also pray for Abascantus to enjoy a successful life and career under Domitian. It is clear how the public setting of *Silv.* 5.1 makes this poem an original version of *epikedia*.

Nevertheless, the political pattern seems to act as a restraint to the manifestation of grief that is in fact absent in the private context of *Silv.* 2.1. However, this might induce the dangerous thought that the poem written for Glaucias and Melior is 'more genuine' and heartfelt than *Silv.* 5.1. What it is safe to assume is certainly that the context of *Silv.* 2.1 allows the poet to be more creative with the genre, but the encomiastic characteristic it features show a high level of sophistication.

With the successful legitimization of Glaucias' status, the funeral becomes a shared social experience (v. 20 *spectatumque Urbi...puerile feretrum*; vv. 175-176 *...plebs cuncta nefas et praevia ferunt/agmina*). The dramatic representation of the funeral<sup>373</sup>, where the lavish display of wealth means nothing compared to the personal loss of Glaucias, strengthens the image of the *puer* as a rational force in Melior's life, and not only as an object of love. The construction of reality in

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<sup>373</sup> Described as 'madness shared' and 'wonder' by Alston-Spentzou 2011, *ibidem*.

the *silva* is entirely built on the relationship between Melior and Glaucias, whose ambiguous role reinforces the power of his presence in Melior's house.

In the final part of the poem, Statius comforts his friend and finally invites him to stop weeping (v. 209-210 ...*quin tu iam vulnera sedas/et tollis mersum luctu caput?*...). The reassurance of the happy life Glaucias enjoys in the Elysium under the care of Blaesus (189-207) acts as a traditional consolatory *topos*. The identity of Blaesus, a former friend of Melior's, remains ambiguous, but it is likely to refer to a similar special bond between a slave and his master<sup>374</sup>. The preoccupation for the destiny of the deceased appears to respect the standards of the genre in a way *Silv.* 5.1 cannot do. The image of Priscilla praying from the afterlife for a successful life for Abascantus at the court of Domitian reverses the premises of the *epikedion* and acquires the traits of an *adynaton*. In the private setting of *Silv.* 2.1, the poetics become more intimate and the wonders limited. However, Statius also confers to Glaucias the power of consoling Melior in his dreams, in the same way he did in life (vv. 227-234):

(...) ades huc emissus ab atro  
limine, cui soli cuncta impetrare facultas,  
Glaucia (nil sontes animas nec portitor arcet,  
nec durae comes ille serae); tu pectora mulce,  
tu prohibe manare genas noctesque beatas  
dulcibus alloquiis et vivis vultibus imple  
et periisse nega, desolatamque sororem,  
qui potes, et miseros perge insinuare parentes.

Once again, Melior's mourning will be soothed by the spirit of Glaucias, who will keep his role as a 'guardian' from excessive grief and desperation.

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A final aspect of the poem which I believe is relevant in the present work is the space Statius dedicates to his role as a poet in the *epikedion*. As it has been noticed before<sup>375</sup>, the presence of the poet at the funeral and the intimacy with Melior constitute strong arguments for the construction of the poetic *persona*. The main idea promoted throughout the poem is in fact the personal relationship Statius has established with Melior and Glaucias himself, and consequently the sharing of grief and the participation to the funerals (vv. 19 ff.): *ipse etenim tecum nigrae sollemnia*

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<sup>374</sup> Asso 2010, p. 693.

<sup>375</sup> Nauta 2008, pp. 159-160; Coleman 2008, p. 35; Rosati 2013 (forthcoming).

*pompae/spectatumque Urbi scelus et puerile feretrum/prodixi; saevos...acervos/plorantemque animam...vidi; teque...vix tenui similis comes.*

The rhetorical strategy employed by Statius in this *silva* to build up his own image as a poet is clear. The remarks initially made in the *epistula praefatoria* stress the usual ‘speed’ of the composition as inspired by grief (ll. 7-11 *huius amissi recens vulnus, ut scis, epicedio prosecutus sum adeo festinanter ut excusandam habuerim affectibus tuis celeritatem. nec nunc eam apud te iacto qui nosti, sed et ceteris indico, ne quis asperiore lima carmen examinet et a confuso scriptum et dolenti datum, cum paene supervacua sint tarda solacia*)<sup>376</sup>. The strategy appears to be a bold one: proclaiming the ability of composing poetry promptly, while at the same time claiming the refinement of the written literary work. In addition to that, the specific genre of the *epicedion* seems the less suitable for combining these two contradictory qualities, at least according to the Stoic tradition<sup>377</sup>. The affected apology for the unpolished immediate composition of the poem clashes with the actual publication, dated at least two years after Glaucias’ death<sup>378</sup>.

The acceptance of Melior’s extreme grief and the legitimacy of mourning shape the self-portrait of Statius ‘the friend’ and ‘the poet’. In fact, the verses quoted above are the only ones in the poem where Statius does not represent himself in his poetic role. On the contrary, at the beginning of the *silva* the author describes his personal reaction to Glaucias’ death as the impossibility of composing a proper consolation (*quod...ordiar*) already during the funeral (*ante rogos et adhuc vivente favilla*). As the poetic *persona* identifies Statius throughout the poem, the poetic composition and performance also express the author’s grief for the death of Glaucias, even when the recipient is not ready to hear any consolation (vv. 5-8 *cum iam egomet cantus et verba medentia saevus/confero, tu...odisti...chelyn surdaque averteris aure*).

The legitimization of Melior’s inconsolability (v. 16 *nemo vetat*) finds its counterpart in Statius’ inability to write (v. 17 *...lacrimis en et mea carmine ipso/ora natant tristesque cadunt in verba liturae*)<sup>379</sup>. However, the respectful silence Statius displays is intertwined with the awareness of his role in the poem, when he finally asks for the permission to sing (v. 17 *iamne canam?*). In a way, the poet claims his ability to put into words both the grief and the consolation that Melior cannot express. If one reads the poem in this way, it will become apparent how Statius portrays himself both as a friend and a professional poet.

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<sup>376</sup> With Newlands 2011 pp. 58-61 *ad loc.*

<sup>377</sup> Newlands 2011, p. 61 *ad vv.* 11-12 “consolation is effective only *after* a period of time, such as a year” (with quotes).

<sup>378</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 65.

<sup>379</sup> A similar image is noted to appear also in Ovid by Van Dam 1984, p. 84 and reprised by Coleman 2008, p. 30: Ovid, *Tr.* 1.1, 13-14 (to his book) *neve liturarum pudeat; qui viderit illas,/de lacrimis factas sentiat esse meis*; 3.1, 15-16 *littera suffuses quod habet maculosa lituras,/laesit opus lacrimis ipse poeta suum*.

The two *personae* so combined in the self-representation are joined in the communal aim of consoling Melior, with distinctive features (vv. 26-35):

et nunc heu vittis et frontis honore soluto  
infaustus vates versa mea pectora tecum  
plango lyra: †et diu† comitem sociumque doloris,  
si merui luctusque tui consortia sensi,  
iam lenis patiare precor: me fulmine in ipso  
audivere patres; ego iuxta busta profusis  
matribus atque piis cecini solatia natis,  
et mihi, cum proprios gemerem defectus ad ignes  
(quem, Natura!) patrem. nec te lugere severus  
arceo, sed confer gemitus pariterque fleamus.

Status describes himself with the traditional attributes of the poet, the headband (*vittis*) and the lyre, appropriately turned over for the sad occasion (*versa...lyra*). The sympathy for the addressee is expressed by the professional poet by the refusal to sing, *i. e.* by rejecting the very expression of the inner self (*infaustus vates*)<sup>380</sup>. The denial of composing or performing poetry (like in this case) for the excessive grief is not a new idea, and can be traced back at least to the exile poetry of Ovid.<sup>381</sup> This particular form of poetic *recusatio*, for which the poet declares his *ingenium* mute before grief, leads Ovid to the extreme admission that poetry and mourning are mutually exclusive (*Tr.* 5.12, 9): *luctibus an studio video debere teneri*.

In our *silva*, the self-deprecating ‘pose’ played by Ovid gives way to a mixed model, according to which Statius presents himself both as a friend and a professional poet. In the context of the poetic performance, Statius seems to stress the *impromptu* character of his poetry, and presents his *ars* as an oral, immediate response to Melior’s grief<sup>382</sup>, as stressed in the above passages by the words employed to describe his work: *canam; me...audivere patres; cecini*.

The Ovidian claim that poetry and grief cannot coexist seems to be superficially confirmed by the Flavian poet when he argues that he will put the lyre aside (*versa...lyra*), and just be a companion for Melior (*mea pectora tecum/plango...comitem sociumque doloris*). The two ‘souls’ of Statius seem to exclude one another, and singing for Melior is considered inappropriate (*infaustus vates; intempesta cano*) as the pain is still fresh.

However, friendship and intimacy are immediately brought back in the world of the professional poet, who does not hesitate to guarantee the effectiveness of his poetic consolation (vv.

<sup>380</sup> On the similarities between Statius as inspired *vates* and Orpheus see Lovatt 2007.

<sup>381</sup> See *e. g.* *Tr.* 4.2, 15-30. On Ovid’s development of the ‘pose’ of poetic *impasse* see the excellent work of Williams 1995, especially pp. 50-79. On Statius’ identity as professional poet see the forthcoming contribution of Rosati 2013.

<sup>382</sup> On the ‘oral’ value of the *Silvae* cfr. Coleman 2008, who sees in this trait the reason for the apparent absence of epigraphic evidence in the collection.

30-34). The *captatio benevolentiae* is carefully balanced between past commissioned consolatory performances and the personal experience of bereavement (the loss of his father). Statius establishes a poetic negotiation with his addressee in the actual delivery of the poem. The illusion of the uselessness of poetry is remarked again at the end of the passage, where Statius encourages Melior to weep together with his friends.

After these considerations, the initial question *iamne canam?* (v. 17) does not merely draws “attention to a major issue of 2.1, the efficacy of poetry”<sup>383</sup>, but appears in its rhetorical value of preparing the actual (and effective) poetic performance that follows.

In other words, Statius employs the traditional image of the sympathetic poet at loss for words in the moments following Glaucias’ death and funeral; his voice is silent. As Melior’s grief is portrayed as inconsolable and boundless, so the poetic *ars* declares its inability (or better, its rejection) to express it.

Such an *impasse* is, of course, rhetorical<sup>384</sup>, and Statius leaves clear signs of the relevance of the *epikediton* as a way to express grief and therefore consoling Melior. At the end of the description of Glaucias, the awareness that only poetry can keep his memory alive is clearly stated (vv. 54-55): *...cuncta in cineres gravis intulit hora/hostilisque dies; nobis meminisse relictum*.

The importance of the poetic performance (oral and written) is imagined as a *continuum* with the actual ceremony commemorating Glaucias. The description of the funeral (vv. 158-178), introduced by a striking *praeteritio* (*quid ego...loquar*) indulges in the lavish display of Melior’s wealth and his close relationship with his *puer*<sup>385</sup>, but few are the references to the location of the tomb (*plebs...Flaminio quae limite Mulvius agger/transvehit*). Coherently, there is no mention of an epitaph, as a possible hint to the function played by the poem itself. The poetic lamentation replaces the physical monument (eventually destined to ruin) and acquires the traditional value of eternity<sup>386</sup>.

This idea is more explicitly stated in *Silv.* 5.1, where Statius’ *epikediton* replaces the epitaph on the tomb of Priscilla (vv. 10-15)<sup>387</sup>:

Sed mortalis honos, agilis quem dextra laborat:

<sup>383</sup> Newlands 2011, p. 70 *ad loc.*

<sup>384</sup> With caution, we could probably read *Silv.* 5.5 as more personal. Statius’ grief for the death of his own *verna* leads him to hate his own art and to poetic *impasse*: vv. 23 ff. See especially the expression *ad v. 33 scindo chelyn*. On this cfr. Rosati 2013 (forthcoming).

<sup>385</sup> The details of the pyre and the attitude of Melior closely resemble Opheltes’ funeral in book 6 of the *Thebaid*. Cfr. Erasmo 2008, pp. 127-140.

<sup>386</sup> The *topos* is well-known and I can quote at least the famous examples of Horace, *Carm.* 3.30, 1-6 *exegi monumentum aere perennius...non omnis moriar*; and Ovid, *Met.* 15, 871-879. On the relevance of these passages in Statius see also Hardie 1983, pp. 153 and 155.

<sup>387</sup> On this aspect in the *Silvae* cfr. Once again Coleman 2008, pp. 32-39.



nos tibi, laudati iuvenis rarissima coniunx,  
longa nec obscurum finem latura perenni  
temptamus dare iusta lyra, modo dexter Apollo  
quique venit iuncto mihi semper Apolline Caesar  
adnuat: haud alio melius condere sepulchro.

The more intimate context of *Silv.* 2.1 might be the reason why we do not find a similar declaration for Glaucias. However, the traditional motif of *epikedia* about the inexorability of fate (vv. 208-226) can as well be interpreted in a metapoetic sense. The final invitation to the deceased Glaucias to visit Melior in his dreams in order to reassure him about his presence (v. 232-233 ...*vivis vultibus imple/et periisse nega*...) represents the final poetic *sphragis* Statius confers to the eternalising power of poetry.

The lapse of time between the event and the inclusion in the book leads to the complex nature of this *epikedia*: an insight on the social dynamics of a master and his slave, the extreme characterization of grief, and finally, the metapoetic considerations of the poet about his own role within the *silva*. All these aspects represent an exciting and original *variatio* of the genre, and demonstrate Statius' ability to create a new and effective encomiastic strategy throughout the *Silvae*.

### b. *Silv.* 3.2: Beyond the models: a *propemptikon* in the imperial age

This poem of Statius has attracted the interest of scholars for the important debt it owes to Augustan models<sup>388</sup>. The cross-references to other *propemptika* in fact represent a sign of how imitation plays a relevant (and unusual) role in Statius' poem.

Due to its specific nature, this genre contemplates particular *formulae* and topics to be covered. In his rhetorical treatise from the third century A.D., Menander Rhetor distinguishes three types of *propemptika*, according to the social status of the speaker and the addressee (3. 395. 4-32 Sp.): superior to inferior, equal to equal, and inferior to superior. Statius seems in fact to play both with his Augustan models and more in general with the tradition of the genre, as it is difficult to categorise the poem according to Menander's distinction.

In his famous work on literary genres, Francis Cairns<sup>389</sup> analyses a few examples of send-offs (and specifically Prop. 1.6 as a peculiar version of it) following the distinction made by Menander. However, in the light of the analysis I am to pursue, it is important to remember that as the ancient rhetorician argues, a certain tone of affection is to be expected in any kind of *propemptikon*, even when the addressee happens to be of a higher status than the speaker: λέγω δὲ ταῦτα οὐκ ἀποστερῶν οὐδένα τῶν προειρημένων τρόπων τῆς προπεμπτικῆς τῶν ἐρωτικῶν παθῶν. The presence of affectionate tones is relevant to the theme of my enquiry, as in this particular poem it balances the absence of a direct encomium<sup>390</sup>.

Turning now more specifically to the Statian poem, the most common interpretation seems to define it as an expansion of Horace's *Carm.* 1.3<sup>391</sup> and the traditional *topoi* of the genre (appeal to the maritime gods, attack on seafaring). In a way, it appears that the scholarship on the *silva* has mainly focussed on how it relates with other literary precedents, more than it has examined how the poem sets itself apart in its social and historical context.

The addressee of the *propemptikon* is Maecius Celer, who had been a *tribunus militum* in Syria and was about to depart as a legionary legate (the departure is the occasion which inspired the poem)<sup>392</sup>. Not otherwise known except from the *Acta of the Arval brothers* which mention him (CIL

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<sup>388</sup> The multiple models are identified specifically with Hor. *Carm.* 1.3, Ov. *Am.* 2.11 and Prop. 1.8. See Nisbet-Hubbard 1970, pp. 40-45; Cairns 1972 p. 11-12 and 233-234 on the composition of *propemptika*; more specifically on the *silva* see Hardie 1983, pp. 156-164 and Rühl 2006, pp. 264-271. On the Horatian and Ovidian influences on the *silva* (Hor., *Carm.* 1.3, *Epod.* 1 and Ovid, *Am.* 2.11 in particular) see more recently Kershner 2008, pp. 85-117. The author focusses particularly on the epic tones of the *silva*.

<sup>389</sup> Cairns 1972, *ibidem*.

<sup>390</sup> As noted by Cairns 1972, p. 234 and Hardie 1983, p. 158, who argues that “the omission of the encomium is in fact a signal that he is imitating older poets”.

<sup>391</sup> Cairns 1972, p. 233, Nisbet-Hubbard 1970, pp. 40-45 and Laguna 1992, p. 198.

<sup>392</sup> Nauta 2002, p. 213 sets this information right after Laguna 1992, pp. 193 and 225 (already mentioned in Kershner 2008, p. 85).

VI 2074), the only other source is Statius<sup>393</sup>. Therefore, it is quite difficult to establish the nature of the relationship between Maecius and the poet. If we were to follow Cairns' analysis of *propemptika* (following Menander Rhetor's categorisation), the absence of formal encomium should suggest a relationship between equals; however, Statius himself seems to deny this scenario when he calls Maecius *regis...mei* (3.2, 92-93) and when in the *epistula praefatoria* he states *sequitur libellus quo splendidissimum et mihi iucundissimum iuvenem Maecium Celerem, a sacratissimo imperatore missum ad legionem Syriacam, quia sequi non poteram, sic prosecutus sum* (11-15). With these lines in mind, it is probably safer to think about an affectionate relationship between a tutor and his pupil (Statius calls him *iuvenis...Maecius* at vv. 6-7), that still puts Statius in a social inferior position<sup>394</sup>. The absence of the traditional *skhetliamos* (the invitation made to the addressee not to leave) represents another signal of the unequal balance between the recipient and the speaker. However, the military role of Celer appears to justify such attitude, since the appointment to a prestigious command could hardly be rejected. In other words, Statius plays with the rhetoric of the genre and introduces the subject with affectionate ironical tones. Statius does not hesitate to innovate when he reverses the classic scheme by blaming himself for not being able to follow his friend at war (vv. 93-95) and pursues a more general attack on sea-faring (vv. 61-77). This last aspect seems to be the main focus of the Horatian ode 1.3, where the preoccupation with Virgil's voyage to Greece leads to a more general reflection on human *audacia* in facing the dangers of the sea<sup>395</sup>. In addition to that, Horace contrasts with Statius for the absence of excuses for not following Virgil, since the presence of the 'excusatory *propemptikon*' in this genre is traditional<sup>396</sup>.

A possible interesting interpretation of the two poems suggests Statius goes beyond his model. Firstly, he possibly exaggerates the terms in which a journey to Egypt could be perceived as dangerous; secondly, he ironically apologises to Maecius for not being able to go to war with him, thus 'weakening' Horace's position of not making any excuse at all for not following Virgil on a trip to Greece.

Since there is an evident lack of information about the nature of the social relationship portrayed here, I am keen on examining the linguistic features Statius employs to praise his addressee even without a formal encomium, and more in particular, the application of the *ethos erotikon* recommended by Menander Rhetor. The presence of a communal lexicon amongst the spheres of love, *amicitia* and praise has been frequently noted in commentaries (even on our

<sup>393</sup> Corti 1991, p. 219 suggests Maecius could have been of senatorial origins.

<sup>394</sup> Scholars agree that there was a close relationship of some kind between Statius and Maecius Celer. See Kirshner 2008, p. 88 n. 12. Similar tones of witty intimacy characterise Horace's *Carm.* 1.29, dedicated to the young Iccius.

<sup>395</sup> A good summary of recent interpretations of *Carm.* 1.3 in Pucci 1992, pp. 660-661, n. 5.

<sup>396</sup> As stated by Cairns 1972, p. 11.

silva<sup>397</sup>) but still many questions remain unanswered: in which terms is the language of love and *amicitia* being employed in imperial panegyric? What is the image of the empire and/or of his officers Statius aims to convey? In what terms are his personal intentions and needs determined by using this 'language of love'?

The employability of such language seems even more appropriate in the context of a *propemptikon*, as this represents a theme also developed in elegiac poetry. However, the dynamics going on between the genre of encomium and elegy is not in any way straightforward, nor just one-way, but more likely based on the mutual aim of praising a *laudandus*. As I said before in the course of the present work, 'courting' and 'praise' are concepts that belong to the socio-political frame as well as to the erotic context. In both scenarios, the speaker aims to conquer their recipient, being it a *dominus* or a *domina*; hence, it is not surprising that a similar language is developed<sup>398</sup>. In our discussion on the negotiation of patronage, I will investigate how the employment of this language reveals itself to be a successful strategy for the encomiast.

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The first part of the *silva* is dedicated to the invocation to the sea gods for the imminent journey. The poet appeals to Neptune when he first introduces his recipient, Maecius Celer (vv. 5-8):

*grande* tuo *rarumque* damus, Neptune, profundo  
*depositum*; iuvenis dubio committitur alto  
 Maecius atque *animae partem* super aequora *nostrae*  
*maiolem* transferre parat. (...)

The Aristotelian idea of an original only soul divided into two halves is employed here as an image of friendship. As it has been noted, Statius craftily combines here two Horatian lines (*Carm.* 1.3, 8 *serves animae dimidium meae* and *Carm.* 2.17, 5 *te meae...partem animae*)<sup>399</sup>. However, the expression *animae partem...nostrae/maiolem* effectively delivers an ambivalent tone of affection employed both in contexts of love and friendship. As an example of the erotic application of a similar *iunctura*, the searching does not go very far, as it can be found in *Silv.* 5.1, 176-177 to define the conjugal love between Abascantus and Priscilla: *tum sic unanimum moriens solatur*

<sup>397</sup> Laguna 1992, p. 196 and *passim* in the commentary.

<sup>398</sup> On this cfr. again Rosati 2003.

<sup>399</sup> Laguna 1992, p. 202 *ad Silv.* 3.2, 7 and Nisbet-Hubbard 1970a, p. 48 *ad loc* and Nisbet-Hubbard 1970b, p. 275-276 *ad loc*.

*amantem:/pars animae victura meae (...)*<sup>400</sup>. The passage expresses the idea of the survival of love beyond death, a reassuring thought shared by Ovid in the epistle addressed to his wife (*Tr.* 1.2, 43-44): *at nunc peream...dimidia certe parte superstes ero*. The employment of this *topos* in a love context does not surprise, but it represents an interesting twist when applied to other social spheres, as in *Ex Pont.* 1.6, 16: *magnaue pars animi consiliiue mei*. In this case, the poet employs the rhetorical image for connecting in a strategic way his own destiny to the recipient's; hence a traditional expression of praise becomes a rhetorical tool for negotiation. Once again, this example offers a clear demonstration of the similarities existing between language of love and power.

As I have already argued previously, the employment of the language of affection in Ovid's elegies of the exile reveals a strategy of *captatio benevolentiae*. The exiled poet associates his own fortune with his recipients by using tones of affection and elevating his poetry to an instrument of *praeconium*<sup>401</sup>. Therefore, what can be said about Statius' employment of a similar language in his poetry for patrons? In the reported passage of the *silva*, the poet defines Maecius *grande...rarumque...depositum*, which is a well-known *variatio* of a similar technical word from a Horatian verse (*Carm.* 1.3, 5, *creditum*). Does the commercial image behind the use of these terms mean more than just a simple reprise of the Horatian *locus*? The 'quantification' of the terms of friendship established by Statius could in fact be alluding to the affectionate (but also very practical and 'mundane') relationship with Maecius<sup>402</sup>. As an actual object of value (a *depositum*, in fact), the poet acts as the 'owner' and entrusts Neptune to look after it both for its emotional and practical value.

After his appeal to the maritime divinities for Maecius' voyage, Statius can finally acknowledge a positive response (vv. 50-58):

Audimur. vocat ipse ratem nautasque morantes  
 increpat. ecce meum timido iam **frigore pectus**  
 labitur et **nequeo**, quamvis movet ominis horror,  
**claudere suspensos oculorum in margine fletus.**  
 iamque ratem terris divisit fune soluto  
 navita <et> angustum deiecit in aequora pontem.  
**saevus et e puppi longo clamore magister**  
**dissipat amplexus atque oscula fida revellit,**  
**nec longum cara licet in cervice morari.**

The poet openly expresses his feelings about the incoming departure of Maecius with caring tones. In particular, the fearful reaction of Statius is expressed by the common idea of the freezing heart

<sup>400</sup> With Gibson 2006a, p. 141 *ad loc.*

<sup>401</sup> On this see Rosati 2003, p. 62 and Galasso 1995, pp. 43-44 especially on Ovid.

<sup>402</sup> See OLD, p. 520, s. v. *depositum*: "money or sim. object". Nisbet-Hubbard 1970a, p. 47 *ad Carm.* 1.3, 5.

(*timido...frigore pectus*), although surprisingly varied by the impossibility of refraining from tears: an odd specification, as weeping before a journey was a bad omen, as Statius points out.

The combination of two different emotional reactions (the cold heart and the crying) is remarkable, since it differs from the traditional use of these images. For example, in *Heroides* 15, 112 a similar *iunctura* (*frigore pectus erat*) describes the strong reaction of the abandoned Sappho, who is literally speechless for the shock and not able to share a tear (vv. 110-111 *nec me flere diu nec potuisse loqui./Et lacrimae deerant oculis et lingua palato*). The opposite reaction described in the *silva* adds an effective *pathos* to the scene and pictures the poet as an affectionate friend. As Alex Hardie has noticed<sup>403</sup>, “Statius' fearful reaction deliberately reverses the fearlessness of Horace's 'first sailor' whose *pectus* was brass-bound, who felt no fear, and who could contemplate sea creatures *siccis oculis*.”<sup>404</sup>

The traditional attack on sea-faring is transferred onto a more personal level, and the departure of Maecius is described with emotional tones. The skipper on the ship ready to depart is in fact called *saevus*, because he shows no sympathy for long farewells. The following verses accentuate even more the idea of the affection to Maecius. The combination of hugs and kisses (*amplexu; oscula*) in the very moment of the departure constitutes a *topos* of farewell poems across genres. For example, in *Her.* 13, 11-12 Laodamia departs from Protesilaus' embrace with the words *solvor ab amplexu, Protesilae, tuo*, and again in *Her.* 18, 101 in a similar way Hero greets Leander: *excipis amplexu feliciaque oscula iungis*. In the different genre of the *Metamorphoses*, Alcyone says farewell to her husband Ceyx with tears and hugs (*Met.* 11, 458-459): *horruit Alcyone lacrimasque emisit obortas/amplexusque dedit*. With similar words but in a much more dramatic scenario, Ovid marks the farewell from his wife before the exile (*Tr.* 1.3, 79-81): *tum vero coniunx umeris abeuntis inhaerens/miscuit haec lacrimis tristia verba suis*. The *iunctura* is not only employed in love relationships, but, as in the case of the *silva*, can be used for expressing a close *amicitia*, as when a friend of Ovid's wishes his farewell to the poet (*Tr.* 3.5, 1-4) *usus amicitiae tecum mihi parvus, ut illam/non aegre posses dissimulare, fuit,/nec me complexus vinclis propioribus esses/nave mea vento, forsan, eunte suo*.<sup>405</sup>

Statius appears to stress the language of love playing here by expressing the idea of hugs with a second *iunctura* (*cara...cervice*) which also represents a personal *variatio*<sup>406</sup> of the more

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<sup>403</sup> Hardie 1983, p. 160.

<sup>404</sup> Hor., *Carm.* 1.3, 15 *qui siccis oculis monstra natantia*.

<sup>405</sup> In reception studies, these motifs of farewell (the eyes; the kisses and hugs) are examined in Ausonius' *Tristia* by Moroni 2010, pp. 76-80.

<sup>406</sup> Other *loci* are St., *Theb.* 12, 388 *ad vultum et cara vicibus cervice fruuntur*; St., *Ach.* 1, 929 *Auroramque timet: cara cervice mariti*.

famous expression *carum caput*<sup>407</sup>. In this particular case, the image is not just employed in an erotic context, but also in family representations, as in the case of Evander and Pallas in *Aen.* 8, 568-569: *non ego nunc dulci amplexu divellerer usquam,/nate, tuo*. In the case of the *amicitia* between Statius and Celer, the presence of quasi-paternal tones seems rather appropriate.

Following the specific section of the *skhetliasmos* (vv. 61-77)<sup>408</sup>, Statius moves onto describing Maecius' voyage and his own personal worries (vv. 78-84):

Iusta queror. fugit ecce vagas ratis acta per undas  
paulatim minor et **longe servantia vincit**  
**lumina**, tot gracili ligno complexa timores,  
quique super reliquos te, **nostri pignus amoris**  
portatura, Celer. **quo nunc ego pectore somnos**  
**quove queam perferre dies?** quis cuncta paventi  
nuntius (...)

The detail of the eyes following the disappearing ship (*longe servantia vincit/lumina*) represents an evident borrowing from the language of love: the parting of the lovers in fact is usually marked by this particular image. Apart from Dido in the famous passage from the *Aeneid* (4, 586-588 *regina e speculis ut primam albescere lucem/ vidit et aequatis classem procedere velis,/litora et vacuos sensit sine remige portus*) a few other examples are offered by Ovid in the *Heroides*, from which three scenes can be mentioned. The first one describes the nymph Oenone's grief at Paris' departure (5, 53-56): *aura levis rigido pendentia lintea malo/suscitat, et remis eruta canet aqua./prosequor infelix oculis abeuntia vela,/qua licet, et lacrimis umet harena meis*. A second example is given in the story of Ariadne and Theseus<sup>409</sup>, who abandons her in tears (10, 45-46): *quid potius facerent, quam me mea lumina flerent,/postquam desieram vela videre tua?*. Interestingly, both scenes depict a rather dramatic moment of abandonment more than a simple detachment of lovers; however, the employment of a similar lexicon for describing the very moment confirm its adaptability to different contexts. Finally, a longer scene is described in 13, 17-20: *dum potui spectare virum, spectare iuvabat,/sumque tuos oculos usque secuta meis;/ut te non poteram, poteram tua vela videre,/vela diu vultus detinere meos*. The love shared by Laodamia and Protesilaus is finally a happy one, but doomed to an early separation. The image of the eyes following the ship that is taking away the lover is also represented in the *Metamorphoses* (11, 463-472)<sup>410</sup>:

<sup>407</sup> For which see e. g. Catull. 68, 119-120 *nam nec tam carum confecto aetate parenti/una caput seri nata nepotis alit;* Hor., *Carm.* 1.24, 2 *tam cari capitis?* (...) and Verg., *Aen.* 4, 354 *me puer Ascanius capitisque iniuria cari*.

<sup>408</sup> On the philosophical implications of human *audacia* in this passage see Kirshner 2008, pp. 99-106.

<sup>409</sup> But already in Catullus, 64, 250-251 *quae tum prospectans cedentem maesta carinam/multiplices animo volvebat saucia curas*.

<sup>410</sup> Yardley 1979, pp. 183-188 rightly defined this passage as a *propemptikon*.

(...) sustulit illa  
 umentes oculos stantemque in puppe recurva  
 concussaue manu dantem sibi signa maritum  
 prona videt redditque notas; ubi terra recessit  
 longius, atque oculi nequeunt cognoscere vultus,  
 dum licet, insequitur fugientem lumine *pinum*;  
 haec quoque ut haut poterat spatio submota videri,  
 vela tamen spectat summo fluitantia malo;  
 ut nec vela videt, vacuum petit anxia lectum  
 seque toro ponit (...)

As usual in his poem, Ovid indulges in a detailed visual description of the sequence of the detachment between Ceyx and Alcyone, with particular emphasis on the eyes (*oculos*; *oculi*) and the sight (*videt*; *vultus*; *videri*; *spectat*; *videt*). In this passage, the pathos is obviously more relevant, as it stresses the very last moment Alcyone will see Ceyx alive. The voyage by sea is of course a theme dear to the epic genre, and so is the separation of lovers or spouses. The last example I would like to mention comes from a contemporaneous of Statius, Silius Italicus, who in his *Punica* describes the separation between Hannibal and his wife Imilce (3, 155-157): *haerent intenti vultus et litora servant,/donec, iter liquidum volucris rapiente carina,/consumpsit visus pontus tellusque recessit*. The perspective is here reversed, as it is the man, Hannibal, who stares at his wife and the shore until the ship takes him away. A similar lexicon is displayed in order to convey the *pathos* of the moment, as in the case of the image of the fixed eyes (*servantia...lumina*; *servant...vultus*), even when the scene and the literary genre are different.<sup>411</sup> In all these examples, seeing people out of sight represents a sign of bad omen, for it is followed by a tragic end. However, in the *silva* the employment of this traditional *topos* accentuates the sense of affection and preoccupation of Statius for his friend leaving.

All these examples help explain how the language of love (and not even necessarily of a marital nature) crosses literary genres and can often overlap with the sphere of *amicitia*, as in the case of our *silva*. Statius' concerns about Maecius' safety are yet again expressed with a practical metaphor, in which the poet defines him *nostri pignus amoris*, an expression that reprises the commercial pattern of *depositum* (v. 6). This particular *iunctura* also reinforces the idea of an affectionate friendship. Frequently used for describing father-son relationships (mostly in the plural *pignora*)<sup>412</sup>, *pignus* combines here both a practical and an emotional meaning. Moreover, as we have seen in *Silv.* 2.1, the combination of erotic and paternal tones contributes to the encomiastic idealisation of the relationship between the poet and his young patron. A broader employability of

<sup>411</sup> Another example of *variatio* of the theme of *discidium* can be found in Lucan, 8, 47, where Cornelia observes every ship in Mytilene waiting for Pompeius to come back: *prospiciens fluctus nutantia longe/semper prima vides venientia vela carinae*.

<sup>412</sup> But see for example the case of Glaucias, defined *pignus rari amici* in *Silv.* 2.1, 200.



*pignus* is shown by Plinius when he writes *praeterea filiam uxorem nepotem sorores, interque tot pignora veros amicos* (Ep. 1.12, 3-4). Ovid also relies on the same word for securing his friends' support from Rome (Ex P. 2.7, 35-36): *non igitur vereor quo te rear esse verendum, / cuius amor nobis pignora mille dedit*. The Ovidian appeal to the past 'pledges of love' shows a strategical use of this term that aims to bring the poet closer to his addressee. Statius' intent in the *silva* is similar, but expressed in a more ambiguous way than Ovid. I would not even say with absolute certainty if the genitive *nostri...amoris* is subjective or objective: the poet might ambiguously have set himself as both the giver and the recipient of love. The negotiation of power with the poet that Ovid develops in the poetry of the exile finds here a close application; in other words, the *amor* Statius and Maecius share is mutually beneficial, securing to the poet-client an important *amicus*, and to the *patronus* the chance of an eternal memory in the poet's verses.

The series of questions that follows (vv. 82-89) strengthens the emotional tones Statius conveys to the *propemptikon*. The poet presents the itinerary of Maecius' voyaging in a list of worried rhetorical questions meant to be at the same time descriptive and sympathetic. The *timores* and lack of sleep the poet feels for his friend (vv. 82-83: *...quo nunc ego pectore somnos / quove queam perferre dies?...*) are full of erotic echoes. Similar concerns seem to convey Hero's voice when in *Her.* 19, 110 she complains about Leander's absence (*cogit et absentes plura timere locus*), or Penelope when she worries about the distant Ulysses (*Her.* 1, 57-80).

According to Cairns<sup>413</sup>, the verses that immediately follow the series of questions represent the "excusatory *propemptikon*", *i. e.* the section of the genre where the speaker apologises for not accompanying the addressee in the voyage. Had Statius in mind Horace in *Epode* 1 where the poet cannot follow Maecenas is fairly reasonable<sup>414</sup>, but I would like to draw the attention to another element playing in the passage (vv. 90-95):

sed merui questus. ***quid enim te castra petente  
non vel ad ignotos ibam comes impiger Indos  
Cimmeriumque chaos?*** starem prope bellica regis  
signa mei, seu tela manu seu frena teneres,  
armatis seu iura dares; operumque tuorum  
***etsi non socius, certe mirator adessem.***

Statius manages to combine the characteristic apology for not following his friend (*merui questus*) to the other traditional motif in the language of love and *amicitia*, *i. e.* the desire to follow the recipient to the end of the world (*ad ignotos ibam...Indos/Cimmeriumque chaos*). We have already

<sup>413</sup> Cairns 1972, p. 11.

<sup>414</sup> On this cfr. Hardie 1983, p. 162.

encountered this *topos* in the *Silvae*, and especially in *Silv.* 5.1, 127-134 where Priscilla shows her promptness to follow her husband Abascantus in his missions. Statius uses the *topos* in a similar way in the *laudatio* of his wife Claudia in *Silv.* 3.5, 18-22: (...) *quas autem comitem te raptō per undas?/quamquam, et si gelidas irem mansurus ad Arctos/vel super Hesperiae vada caligantia Thylen/aut septemgeminī caput impenetrabile Nili,/hortarere vias.* (...). If in the conjugal frame the *topos* gave evidence of Priscilla's and Claudia's *pietas* and devotion<sup>415</sup>, in our passage Statius applies it to a non-erotic context. The diffusion of such a theme in different genres was not a novelty, as it was widely employed in the 'friendship poetry' of Catullus (*Carm.* 11) and in the elegiac poets later.<sup>416</sup>

The notion of 'the end of the world', despite its obvious exaggerated tone, can be more specifically assessed according to the actual geographical places that are mentioned. Statius names important places in the Eastern political sphere (India, the Parthian empire, the Cimmerian Bosphorus<sup>417</sup>), which had been crucial for the Roman *Ostpolitik* since Julius Caesar. In this context, calling Maecius *rex meus* not only signifies the individual relationship Statius can boast<sup>418</sup>, but might also carry the suggestion of oriental kingship. This literary device expressing devotion to the recipient becomes a necessary tool for the poet to negotiate his role of encomiast. This is very clear in the use Tibullus makes of the *topos* in the *Panegyricus Messallae* (3.7, 192-197; 201-203):

Nec solum tibi Pierii tribuentur honores:  
pro te vel rapidas ausim maris ire per undas,  
adversis hiberna licet tumeant freta ventis,  
pro te vel densis solus subsistere turmis  
vel parvum Aetnaeae corpus committere flammae.  
Sum quodcumque, tuum est.(...)

Quod tibi si versus noster, totusve minusve,  
vel bene sit notus, summo vel inerret in ore,  
nulla mihi statuent finem te fata canendi.

Paraphrasing the poet's words, his own poetic activity is all that the 'poor' poet can offer to his patron, when everything else fails. The dedication to the recipient, expressed by the traditional desire of following him to remote places, ultimately coincides rather with the poem celebrating Messalla's military achievements.

<sup>415</sup> See Laguna 1992, pp. 357-358 *ad loc.*

<sup>416</sup> As I have already explained about the passage in *Silv.* 5.1. See pp. 129-130.

<sup>417</sup> I do not agree with Laguna 1993, p. 226 *ad loc.* and Kershner 2008, p. 121 when they argue that Statius here refers to unknown places. However, the 'exotic' tones are applied to specific geo-political areas.

<sup>418</sup> Nauta 2002, p. 16 notes how *rex* was used in the language of patronage as a synonym of *amicus*.

In this context of the *propemptikon*, the difference Statius marks between himself and Maecius recalls another typical image of love poetry, the contrast between the 'soldier' and the 'love poet'. If the genre could easily call again for a comparison with Propertius 1.6, 29-30 (*non ego sum laudi, non natus idoneus armis:/hanc me militiam fata subire volunt*), nonetheless in our passage an explicit erotic element is missing, and this has led commentators to consider rather a distinction between an 'active' (Maecius) and 'passive' (Statius) man<sup>419</sup>.

The war scenarios in which the poet imagines Maecius in action are introduced as a series of alternatives (*seu tela...seu frena teneres...seu iura dares*) which are a common way to deliver the encomium. In a similar way to the *Priamel*, the use of *seu* allows the poet to enumerate the military activities Maecius excels in. Besides praising the *laudandus*, one might wonder if Statius relegates his *persona* to a passive friend-client. The impossibility to join his friend (*non socius*) does not prevent the poet from being supportive (*mirator*). The role he pictures himself in might not be directly compared to the poet-lover, but the words employed definitely can be assessed as belonging to the love sphere. For example, *mirator* must definitely carry connotations of affection, and in Propertius the noun is used in an amorous context (2.13, 9-10 *non ego sum formae tantum mirator honestae,/nec si qua illustris femina iactat avos*).

The motif of being present as a surrogate for real help constitutes yet another motif shared both by court and love poetry. In a similar way Horace shows his loyalty to Maecenas on his way to the battle of Actium (*Epod. 1.1, 15-18 roges, tuum labore quid iuvem meo/inbellis ac firmus parum?/comes minore sum futurus in metu,/qui maior absentis habet*) and Priscilla confirms her *fides* to Abascantus (*Silv. 5.1, 130-132 et, si castra darent, vellet gestare pharetras,/vellet Amazonia latus intercludere pelta;/dum te pulverea bellorum nube videret*). It cannot be said though that Statius pictures himself just as an observer, due to his privileged position as a court poet. The power of poetry as a *praeconium* is stressed at the end of the poem (to be discussed later) when Statius asserts he will sing about war in his *Thebaid*.

The literary *otium* that the poet opposes to the military duties of Maecius is strategically heightened to a mythical level when Statius compares his role of *mirator* to the one of Phoenix with Achilles during the war of Troy (vv. 96-98), thus strengthening the teacher/tutee relationship. In the attempt to dignifying his position as friend and poet, Statius professes the sincerity of his support (vv. 99-100):

cur nobis *ignavus amor*? sed pectore fido  
numquam abero longisque *sequar* tua carbasa *votis*.

<sup>419</sup> Sic Laguna 1992, p. 227 ad vv. 92-95.

Wondering why his affection urges him to follow Celer even though he is *imbellis* (v. 98), Statius defines his feelings in an oxymoronic form, where love is slothful (*ignavus*) and no more a *militia* that requires dedication and effort (as Ovid states in *Ars* 2, 233-234 *militiae species amor est; discedite, segnes:/non sunt haec timidis signa tuenda viris*). As it has been said before, it is clear that Statius is not rejecting his support for Celer *tout court*, but rather showing it through the medium of poetry. His silent affection is in fact stressed again (*pectore fido*) and the promise to follow Mecius sailing away is conveyed through prayers (*sequar votis*)<sup>420</sup>. It is interesting to notice that this *iunctura* is employed by Pliny the younger in chapter 86 of the *Panegyricus Traiani*. This section is relevant in our analysis of the *propemptikon*, as Pliny describes the emperor's reaction to the departure of a senator:

Operae pretium est referre, quod **tormentum** tibi iniunxeris, ne quid amico negares. Dimisisti optimum virum tibi **carissimum**, invitus et tristis, et quasi retinere non posses. Quantum **amares** eum, desiderio expertus es, distractus separatusque, dum **cedis** et **vinceris**. (...) Quam ego audio confusionem tuam fuisse, quum digredientem prosequeris! Prosequutus enim nec temperasti tibi, quo minus exeunti in litore **amplexus osculum ferres**. Stetit Caesar in illa amicitiae specula, precatusque maria, celeremque (si tamen ipse voluisset) recursum, nec sustinuit recedentem non etiam atque etiam **votis**, lacrymis, **sequi**.

As we have seen in the course of the analysis of the rhetoric of encomium, the language of *amor* and *amicitia* is employed in the context of imperial eulogy to strengthen the image of the emperor as the ideal ruler. In the case of Trajan, the necessity of restoring a 'genuine' portrait of the emperor after the Domitianic years leads Pliny to stress the *humanitas* of the ruler<sup>421</sup>. More specifically, in this passage the close relationship with a senator is displayed in a scene of departure, where all the traditional elements of the genre that we have analysed so far are present: the torments of the farewell, the hugs and kisses, the desire for the senator not to leave. Finally, the act of following the traveller with prayers and tears (*votis, lacrymis sequi*) recalls exactly the expression used by Statius.

The continuing opposition between his poetic *otium* and Celer's successful career is in fact a common theme in the *Silvae*<sup>422</sup>. It is possible to find striking linguistic similarities between our poem and *Silv.* 4.4, dedicated to another 'man of state', Vitorius Marcellus (vv. 46-54):

felix curarum, cui non Heliconia cordi  
serta nec **imbelles** Parnasi e vertice laurus,

<sup>420</sup> Statius' wish to follow Maecius closely resembles the ones Ovid's wife pronounces in *Tr.* 1.3 *te sequar et coniunx exulis exul ero* and another poem from our collection, *Silv.* 5.2, where the poet wishes farewell to the young Crispinus on his way to war (vv. 5-7) *ceu super Aegaeas hiemes abeuntis amici/vela sequar spectemque ratem iam fessus ab altis/rupibus atque oculos longo querar aere vinci*. Yet another demonstration of the vast employability of this *topos*.

<sup>421</sup> A recent excellent collection of contributions on this topic is Roche 2011.

<sup>422</sup> On this see especially Corti 1991. I discuss this later in this section.

sed viget ingenium et magnos accinctus in usus  
 fert animus quascumque vices. nos otia vitae  
 solamur cantu ventosaeque gaudia famae  
 quaerimus en egomet somnum et geniale secutus  
 litus, ubi Ausonio se condidit hospita portu  
 Parthenope, tenues *ignavo pollice* chordas  
 pulso (...)

The contrast playing here between the different careers the poet and the addressee pursue openly recalls *Silv.* 3.2, hence *imbellis* (3.2, 98) corresponds to *imbelles...laurus* (4.4, 47) and *ignavus amor* (3.2, 99) corresponds to *ignavo pollice* (4.4, 53). The poetic *otia* and the military/political *negotia* meet in the poem and enjoy mutual benefits: the recipients receive eternal praise for their career and virtues, whilst the poet secures protection.

The last part of the *silva* that is relevant to the analytic perspective of these pages is the anticipation of Maecius' return and of the poet's reaction (vv. 127-135):

Ergo erit illa dies, qua te maiora daturus  
 Caesar ab emerito iubeat discedere bello,  
 at nos hoc iterum stantes in litore vastos  
 cernemus fluctus aliasque rogabimus auras.  
 o tum quantus ego aut quanta votiva movebo  
 plectra lyra, cum me magna cervice ligatum  
 attolles umeris atque in mea pectora primum  
 incumbes e puppe novus, servataque reddes  
 conloquia inque vicem medios narrabimus annos;

The most obvious subtext for these verses has been recognised in *Amores* 2.11, 43-50, on which Statius openly models his verses. As S. Kirshner has rightly argued<sup>423</sup>, in a way our poet aims to surpass the Ovidian precedent in portraying his relationship with Maecius Celer in affectionate tones.

At a first reading, the scenes portrayed show very close resemblance. As Ovid will be the first to greet Corinna's return (*primus ego adspiciam*) so Statius will wait on the shore (*at nos...stantes in litore*); in both cases there is a request for gentle breezes (*ipsa roges, Zephyri veniant in linthea pleni; aliasque rogabimus auras*), and in the very moment of the encounter, similar images of affection are used (*excipiam umeris et multa...carpam/oscula; attolles umeris...in mea pectora primum/incumbes*). Finally, the poet and the recipient (Corinna and Celer) engage in conversations to share their own experiences (*narrabis multa; medios narrabimus annos!*).

The similarity of the expressions employed by the poets might be suggested by the rules dictated by the genre, and in particular of this section of the *propemptikon*, called

<sup>423</sup> Kirshner 2008, pp. 107-116, but see already Hardie 1983, p. 162.

*prosphonetikon*<sup>424</sup>, but it is possible to argue that the imitation of the Ovidian model fulfils the encomiastic project of the *silva*. In the elegiac poem, Ovid imagines himself in the moment he will greet Corinna at her arrival using the first person (*adspiciam; dicam; excipiam; carpat*), thus confirming the generic impression of a one-sided *servitium amoris* for a *dura puella*<sup>425</sup>. Different the choice of words in the *silva*, where Statius opts for the *pluralis maiestatis* in describing the waiting moments (*nos...stantes; cernemus; rogabimus*), and lets Celer commence the hugs at his arrival. The poet actually reverses the normal father-son dynamics of the scene<sup>426</sup>, and implies that it is Celer who lifts him up (*attolles*), and not vice versa. Subsequently, the expression *in mea pectora...incumbes*, reasserts the natural order and the actual difference in age.

The parallel analysis of the similar scenes shows in fact the different approach the two poets have towards the addressee. Whilst Ovid seems to play the part of the jealous lover who is devoted to his beloved *domina*, Statius portrays a more equal relationship with his patron-friend, which is intimate but less hierarchical. In a way, Ovid seems to let aside his role as a poet and embrace his elegiac *persona*, by honouring Corinna as a goddess (*nostros advehit illa deos*) and performing a ritual sacrifice (*pro reditu victima vota cadet*). On a different note, Statius reserves a different role for his poetic *persona* in the *silva*: whereas Ovid sacrifices an animal, he will offer his own art (*ego...quanta votiva movebo/plectra lyra*), in a way similar to the previously mentioned promise made by Tibullus to Messalla at the end of *Eleg.* 3.7.

Our poet seems to want to mark a distance from his Augustan model in the description of the intimate conversation with the *laudandus*. In the Ovidian poem, the poet declares to be content in listening to Corinna's tales from her voyage (*narrabis multa*), even in the eventuality they might not be true (*omnia pro veris credam, sint ficta licebit*). With these words, the elegiac poet-lover shows his vulnerability and the power his *domina* holds in the relationship. In other words, Ovid takes the *servitium amoris* to the extreme, when he makes up his own truth (*cur ego non votis blandiar ipse meis?*) to hold onto his beloved.

In a way, it could be said that Statius fills the gaps left by the Ovidian scene. The poet imagines a mutual conversation with Celer, in which they both get a chance to narrate (*inque vicem narrabimus annos*). Moreover, Celer will not just talk about random and improbable events like Corinna (*multa*), but will be delivering memories specifically treasured during the journey (*servata...reddes/conloquia*). The implications of this comparison seem to go even further. Ovid imagines Corinna telling unlikely tales about the ease of the journey, thus creating a convenient truth to believe for him as a poet-lover. However, it is clear that the poetic invention is eventually a

<sup>424</sup> Cairns, pp. 22-31 and on the comparison between Ovid and Statius see Hardie 1983, p. 162.

<sup>425</sup> Corinna in fact left with no consideration for her lover's protests, very much like Propertius in *Eleg.* 1.8a and b.

<sup>426</sup> Cfr. e.g. Aeneas trying to hug Anchises in *Aen.* 6, 701: *ter frustra comprehensa manus effugit imago*.

creation made by Ovid himself, who plays with different levels of truth like in a game of Chinese boxes (and a common strategy in the *Metamorphoses*).

In a less convoluted way, the last section of the *silva* explores in more detail the contents of the intimate conversations Celer and Statius will share. Again, it is possible to sense a distinction with the elegy. Statius lists the places visited by Celer during his mission in a luxurious description of cities and rivers (*regia; sacras; antiquae; opes; pacis iter; dulce; florentis; pretiosa; felices*). The poet celebrates and heightens his patron's achievements without any sign of Ovid's vulnerability. It can be said that he does not need to create his own version of the facts, because Maecius' success will be real, and he is entitled to praise it with his poetry. A further aspect that needs to be stressed is the political relevance of Celer's legateship on the Eastern frontier of the empire, where peace with Parthia will have successfully been maintained (*Latinae/pacis iter*).

This scene bears interesting resemblances with the opening of the *somnium Scipionis* of Cicero, where Scipio meets Masinissa (*De Rep.* 6.9):

Ad quem ut veni, complexus me senex conlacrimavit (...). Deinde ego illum de suo regno, me de nostra re publica percontatus est, multisque verbis ultro citroque habitis ille nobis consumptus est dies.

The actual dream section is also striking for the mention of the military achievements prophesied to Scipio (6.11):

Cum autem Karthaginem deleveris, triumphum egeris censorque fueris et obieris legatus Aegyptum, Syriam, Asiam, Graeciam, deligere iterum consul absens bellumque maximum conficies, Numantiam excindes.

In a similar way to Scipio's dream, the military campaigns of Celer will be celebrated by the poet, who claims his role of prophet (*quanta votiva movebo/plectra lyra!*) and anticipates the dynamics of the future conversation with Celer.<sup>427</sup>

Having dedicated six verses to Maecius' glory, Statius reserves for himself the closing couplets of the *silva*, in which he declares the literary goal he will have achieved by the time: finishing the composition of the *Thebaid*. The strong adversative *ast ego* sounds like a firm claim of literary acknowledgement as an epic poet first, but also as an encomiast.

The *propemptikon* comes to an end with a metapoetic declaration, in which the reader receives a hint on the vast employability of the language of praise: specific generic *topoi* leave space to personal *inventio*, like the use of elegiac language for defying *amicitia* and patronage, to

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<sup>427</sup> A similar claim is made by Tibullus in the *Panegyricus Messallae* (3.7, 118-119): *nec tamen his contentus eris: maiora peractis/instant, compertum est veracibus ut mihi signis*.

the final twist of a potential representation of Maecius as an epic hero<sup>428</sup>. In the end, it is possible to argue that whereas Ovid needs to submit the harsh reality of the elegiac love to an imaginary heroic tale<sup>429</sup>, Statius successfully conveys epic tones to the real achievements of his friend, without any poetic *camouflage*.

In a poem ruled by the specificity of the genre, Statius is still able to innovate and, more specifically, to deliver an encomium even without including an openly encomiastic section, as one could expect from a *propemptikon*<sup>430</sup>. In addition to that, the combination of *topoi* borrowed from other genres (elegy) and the final 'epic' *sphragis* build up the main structure of the *amicitia* portrayed. This last aspect in particular is not new in literature, as already Virgil in the conclusive verses of the *Georgics* opposed his epic poem to Caesar's Eastern conquests (*Georg.* 4. 559-562):

Haec super arborum cultu pecorumque canebam  
et super arboribus, Caesar dum magnus ad altum  
fulminat Euphraten bello victorque volentes  
per populos dat iura viamque adfectat Olympo.

In both texts<sup>431</sup>, the reader is presented with a contrast between two careers, the military and the literary. Virgil argues that his poetic production was inspired by a juvenile *audacia* (*audax iuventa*), thus transferring this audacity to his own activity alongside the celebration of Augustus' military achievements. In the case of Statius, the *sphragis* suggests a more personal relationship with Celer, who is addressed as an affectionate reader that the poet wants to keep updated on his latest work. The celebration of Celer's military successes emerges in contrast with the self-depreciation of Statius' 'small' *Thebaid*. In this way, Statius offers a witty way to promote his own poetry within a context of praise. The effectiveness of this strategy in combining encomium and self-promotion is a pivotal aspect of the *Silvae* and will be dealt in the following chapter.

We do not know the nature of the relationship between the poet and his recipient, but I hope it can be safely argued that the complex rhetorical strategy and the final poetic assertion mark an effective, affectionate and ultimately successful interpretation of a traditional genre within the rhetoric of encomium.

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<sup>428</sup> For this interpretation see Kirshner 2008, pp. 114-115.

<sup>429</sup> In which the *puella* is portrayed as an epic heroine surviving a dangerous journey.

<sup>430</sup> Cairns 1972, p. 234 ff.

<sup>431</sup> The textual comparison is already noted by Gibson 2006b, p. 179.



### c. *Silv.* 1.3, 2.2 and 4.4: *Maior post otia virtus*: the activities of *otium*

The last section of this chapter dedicated to the private sphere of the *Silvae*, will be focused on the representation of literary amateurs, *i. e.* members of the Roman aristocracy who compose verses in their own houses and act as patrons of the arts. Statius employs his encomiastic strategy to praise his patrons and friends who have retired from the public life and can now enjoy philosophical and literary activities (*Silv.* 1.3, 2.2) as well as political figures who enjoy *otium* as a break from their duties (*Silv.* 4.4). This particular aspect places the poet in the favourable position of being included in the world of his addressees, therefore making him the ideal spokesperson and encomiast for his protectors. Another important aspect I will address is the examination of how Statius reinforces his image of professional poet against a potential ‘rivalry’ with literary amateurs. The present analysis will investigate the strategies adopted by Statius to praise the *otia* of his patrons and at the same time negotiate his own role of professional poet.

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The impact of Greek culture on the poetry of the *Silvae* has long been acknowledged as one of the most important feature of the poetry of Statius. His upbringing in Naples and the education he received from his father (teacher of grammar and rhetoric) shaped the literary career of the poet<sup>432</sup>. Also, the self-representation of Statius as a *vates* in Rome suggests the poetic intention of blending a traditional representation of the poet with the reality of the Roman empire<sup>433</sup>. This aspect emerges in particular in the *Silvae*, where the poet can play with the poetic matter in a more diverse way than in his previous epic works. The more personal dimension of the *Silvae* offers an interesting insight on the relationship the poet establishes with his patrons. The intimate and private atmosphere, far from the public ‘extreme’ display of power envisaged in the imperial poems, allows the poet to celebrate the amenities of the luxurious villas and the literary *otia* of the patrons. At the same time, the theme of *otium* offers to Statius the opportunity to define his own art and promote private forms of patronage.

In some cases, the encomiast professes a close relationship with his addressees, making these poems the right place for personal matters, like the epistle dedicated to his wife (3.5) or the poem written to commemorate his father (5.3). However, throughout the collection and even in

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<sup>432</sup> Newlands 2012, pp. 136-159 on literary connections with Naples (Statius, Silius Italicus and Seneca in particular).

<sup>433</sup> For a general overview on Statius as a ‘Greek’ poet see Hardie 1983; cfr. also Lovatt 2007 for the influence of the figure of Orpheus in the self-representation of Statius in the *Silvae*. For an analysis of the Greek and Roman ‘souls’ of Statius see also Rosati 2011. For the representation of Statius as a professional poet, see Rosati 2013 (forthcoming).

these more personal poems, Statius maintains his self-representation as a professional poet, in opposition or assimilation to the literary *otia* of the recipients of his compositions. Moreover, the *persona* he projects is more specifically identified with a ‘singer’, a poet who is able to compose occasional poetry ‘on the spot’ and deliver it like a traditional bard.<sup>434</sup> It is in this sense that Statius represents himself in line with the great Greek lyric tradition of composing occasional poetry.

Statius presents himself continuously as a poet, and this aspect emerges in particular when he confronts himself with patrons cultivating literary interests. From the information we can gather on the addressees of these poems<sup>435</sup>, their dedication to the activities of *otia* appears to be consistent both for figures with public duties (*Silv.* 4.4) and for patrons who retired to the tranquillity of their villas (*Silv.* 1.3 and 2.2). Even if the *otia* featured in the poems are mostly literary and philosophical, a distinction needs to be made for the case of figures like Vitorius Marcellus. In *Silv.* 4.4 Statius interprets *otium* as a temporary break from political activities, which still constitute the main element of praise for the *vir negotiosus* Marcellus. As we will see, in this case Statius opposes his own poetic activity to the public career of his patron, and takes it as an opportunity to strengthen his image of professional poet.

According to tradition, *otium* represents a temporary alternative to the occupations of politics and civic matters (*negotium*), where one can focus on their private interests. In the *Silvae*, the *otia* (mostly literary) often replace the *negotia* and become the main occupation of wealthy patrons.<sup>436</sup> However, the approach to the theme is tailored according to the dedicatee and their *cursus honorum*. In the poems dedicated to patrons with political duties (like *Silv.* 4.4), the ideal of *otium* reflects its traditional meaning of *relaxatio animi*, whilst in the compositions addressed to who has retired from the public scene, *otium* acquires the new meaning of a genuine life style.<sup>437</sup>

An important example of this new type of *vir otiosus* is Manilius Vopiscus, a rich patron featured in *Silv.* 1.3. Ruurd Nauta has argued that Vopiscus belonged to a senatorial family, but

<sup>434</sup> On this aspect see Rosati 2013 (forthcoming).

<sup>435</sup> White 1975.

<sup>436</sup> For a general discussion on *otium* in the imperial period cfr. Connors 2000. For the connections of the villas with the concept of *otium* in Statius and Pliny the younger cfr. Myers 2005 and now also Newlands 2012, pp. 16-20. It is interesting to follow the progressive negative evaluation of *otium* in the Virgilian *Weltanschauung*. Cfr. Dionigi in EV, pp. 905-907 s.v. *otium*. In the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, the *otium* brings men close to a primitive lifestyle and keeps them safe from the troubles of society (*Georg.* 2.459). The ‘political’ value of *otium* is more problematic in the *Aeneid*, where it is replaced by a reality founded on *leges* (*Aen.* 6.810), *imperium* (812), and *fascies* (818). This devaluation follows the Augustan ideology (and of the *mos maiorum*); however, the polarity *otium-bellum* is never resolved. This *impasse* is received from later literature, where different interpretations of *otium* can be found: cfr. e.g. Seneca’s *De tranquillitate animi* with the positions of Statius and Martial.

<sup>437</sup> Unfortunately in most cases the only information about the life and career of the dedicatees are internal from the *Silvae*. The most relevant works are still White 1974, 1975 and 1978, even if the focus is mainly on the prosopography of the characters in the *Silvae* and the *Epigrams* of Martial. More useful in this sense Nauta 2002. For Pollius Felix and Vitorius Marcellus see also respectively Van Dam 1984, pp. 192-193 and Coleman 1988, pp. 135-137.

decided intentionally to retire from the political scene and devote himself to *quies* and *otium*.<sup>438</sup> The safety of the environment in which nature is benevolent<sup>439</sup> makes the villa an ideal *locus amoenus*, and allows Vopiscus to engage in literary and philosophical *otia* (90-94):

*Scilicet hic illi meditantur pondera mores,  
hic premitur fecunda quies, virtusque serena  
fronte gravis sanusque nitor luxuque carentes  
deliciae, quas ipse suis digressus Athenis  
mallet deserto senior Gargettius horto.*

Besides the rejection of *luxus* here expressed, these verses are also relevant for the definition of *otium*, which is here identified mainly with Epicureanism. However, in the context of the poem the idea of *otium* could be intended in a more conventional sense of retirement from public affairs. In the comfortable frame of his villa, Vopiscus meditates on moral matters (*pondera mores*), thus making his *quies*, *fecunda*. Statius carefully qualifies the patron's activities as a philosophical research for *ataraxia* and *tranquillitas animi* (*virtusque serena/fronte gravis*).<sup>440</sup> The passage ends with a hyperbolic note that reveals how Vopiscus' commitment to Epicureanism (through the mention of the *senior Gargettius*), and celebrates the villa as a new *locus amoenus*, to the point that Epicurus himself would prefer it to his Athenian *hortus*. However, this aura of incredulity makes the philosophical aspect of the poem more of a fashion attribute of a rich nobleman, rather than a true adherence to the Epicurean doctrine. A clue could be the use of the *virtus* (v. 91), a key-word also of Stoicism, which could suggest broader philosophical interests. On this aspect, Laguna-Mariscal noted how Statius portrays other figures in the *Silvae* as presenting features of both philosophical systems<sup>441</sup>.

Nonetheless, the encomium of the patron does not include only his philosophical interests, but suggests also literary occupations. The mention of poetic activity alongside a commitment to Epicureanism appears contradictory<sup>442</sup>, and could be another sign of the strategy employed by Statius to praise his patron's *otia*.

<sup>438</sup> Nauta 2002, p. 309. In reality there is not much evidence of this, and no mention of an active career in the past (Hardie 1983, pp. 67-68).

<sup>439</sup> On this aspect of the *silva* see the discussion in Newlands 2002, pp. 121-142.

<sup>440</sup> Corti 1991, p. 192 remarks how Statius averts the accusation of intellectual torpor and ethic weakness. This caution can be compared to few passages of Seneca's, where the philosopher outlines the difference between productive *otium*, which leads to wisdom, and unproductive *otium*, which weakens body and soul. Cfr. Seneca, *De Brev. Vit.* 18, 1-2 *nec te ad segnem aut inertem quietem voco, non ut somno et caris turbae voluptatibus quidquid est in te indolis vividae mergas*. For other relevant passages and bibliography see the useful n. 9 in Corti, *ibidem*.

<sup>441</sup> Laguna 1996, pp. 258.

<sup>442</sup> Even if Epicurus and his followers condemned poetry. Cfr. Nauta 2002, pp. 319-320 for the analysis of the unconventional adherence to Epicureanism of Pollius Felix and Manilius Vopiscus. See also Newlands 2011, pp. 148-149 *ad vv.* 112-120.

Statius establishes a personal connection with Vopiscus as a patron of arts (vv. 99-104):

Hic tua Tiburtes Faunos chelys et iuvat ipsum  
Alciden dictumque lyra maiore Catillum,  
seu tibi Pindaricis animus contendere plectris,  
sive chelyn tollas heroa ad robora, sive  
liventem satiram nigra rubigine turbes  
seu †tua non alia† splendescat epistola cura.

The encomium of patrons who were poetry lovers and literary amateurs acquires an important meaning within the discourse on patronage. In the early imperial age, the quest for protection for poets like Statius and Martial does not differ from other clients: the poetic activity does not necessarily appear to guarantee a literary patronage<sup>443</sup>. However, the recurrent depiction of their patrons as literary amateurs represents an allusive but effective way for encouraging a 'literary' patronage: this is the reason why in the final *laudatio* of *Silv.* 1.3 Statius defines Vopiscus' *otia* as *docta* (vv. 108-109). With this expression, the poet sums up the aspirations of the patron: in a quiet and peaceful environment, he can devote himself to finding a spiritual and philosophical equilibrium while at the same time cultivating his own literary skills, thus reaching the inner peace and wisdom theorized by Epicurus.

*Silv.* 1.3 and 2.2 are particularly relevant in the collection for the themes exploited here by Statius: the mutual influence of man and nature, and the concept of *otium*, which is the focus of the present analysis. The luxury of the villas finds legitimation also in the fact that they are transformed into Epicurean gardens and offer the ideal setting for philosophical and poetical activities. In *Silv.* 2.2 for example, the praise of Pollius Felix is based on his moral virtues as well as on the *tranquillitas animi* he seems to have reached in the peaceful environment of his house (vv. 69-72):

ora ducum ac vatium sapientumque ora priorum,  
quos tibi cura sequi, quos toto pectore sentis  
expers curarum atque animum virtute quieta  
compositus semperque tuus? (...)

In Statius' vision, the possibility of cultivating poetry derives from the balance between inner peace and self-control that Pollius has achieved through the precepts of poets and philosophers; for this reason, he decorates his house with their portraits as an act of homage and gratitude. Therefore, poetry is not only listed among the activities the patrons enjoy in their spare time, but it is praised as an instrument that (together with philosophy), can take them to a higher state of wellbeing. As a

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<sup>443</sup> Cfr. White 1978, *passim* and Corti 1991, p. 194.

consequence of this quasi super-human status, men have a positive influence on natural elements. In other words, the relation man-nature results in a true cooperation which is beneficial for both. After praising the amenities of the villa, Statius introduces the figure of Pollius in the act of meditating and composing poetry (vv. 112-115):

Hic ubi Pierias exercet Pollius artes,  
(seu volvit monitus quos dat Gargettius auctor,  
seu nostram quatit ille chelyn, seu dissona nectit  
carmina, sive minax ultorem stringit iambon)

Pollius is presented as an amateur poet who composes different types of verses (*Pierias...artes*)<sup>444</sup>: hexameters (*nostram quatit ille chelyn*), elegies (*dissona*<sup>445</sup> *nectit carmina*) and iambs (*minax ultorem stringit iambon*)<sup>446</sup>. Carole Newlands has unnecessarily interpreted these verses in a more problematic way, arguing that “Pollius is defined as a ‘learned’ poet (...) whose poetic composition, regardless of genre, is a metaphor for philosophical ordering and control”<sup>447</sup>. The youth of Pollius is described as focused on political aspirations and on a promising career (133-136), with a possible reference to some kind of poetic activity carried on in his earlier years (v. 137 *iuvenile calens plectrique errore superbus*). The philological discussion arisen around this verse (and the possible corruption of *plectri* in particular<sup>448</sup>) does not clarify if Pollius effectively pursued some poetic interests in his youth, but this possibility cannot be excluded. The scarce information about his family background is not helpful in this respect, as all we know is that he was a wealthy member of the local aristocracy<sup>449</sup> and a benefactor. The pursuit of *otia* could be not in contradiction with his earlier political career. The *quies* he has reached in his retired life is compared to a safe place from which the poet-philosopher can observe the other men pursue material goods (129-132):

<sup>444</sup> There are different possible readings of the expression *volvit monitus*. According to Nisbet 1978b p. 1, the passage would suggest Pollius is writing didactic poetry, following the most obvious meaning of *Pierias*; Van Dam 1984, p. 260 *ad loc.*, on the other hand argues that Statius might refer to composing prose, as “Sts.” references to poetry only begins with *chelyn*.” But *volvit monitus* is included in the parallel *seu...seu...seu...sive*, therefore must refer to a composition in verse. Cfr. OLD, p. 1776, s.v. *sive*. See also Newlands 2011, p. 149 *ad loc.* and Corti 1991, p. 200 n. 3.

<sup>445</sup> *Dissonus* must mean distichs even though it literally refers to sound. Cfr. TLL, p. 1506, 2a, s.v. *dissonus*.

<sup>446</sup> The lyre as a metonymy for hexametric poetry is a well-known *topos*: see *Silv.* 1.3, 102 and *Silv.* 5.5, 33, and is particularly relevant in the self-portrait of Statius as a *vates* (see p. 169, n. 433). The elegies are defined *dissona carmina* for the different length of the verses; finally, the iamb is defined *minax* for its traditional connection with Archilochus, famous composer of iambs from the archaic Greek lyric.

<sup>447</sup> Newlands 2002, p. 193.

<sup>448</sup> *Plectri* is found in the ms. M and accepted by a wide group of critics. Hardie 1983, p. 217, n. 76 sums up the possible reference to Pollius’ early life as a professional poet, wandering (*errore*) the plectrum over the strings, or more broadly ‘wandering’ performing poetry. Courtney 1990 suggested *recti* as an emendation, arguing that a possible reference to the poetic activity of Pollius Felix in his youth is not consistent with the political career mentioned here by Statius. The literary interests are the current occupation of the patron, as opposed to the political ones of his earlier years. However, a reference to previous poetic activity does not contradict the present Epicurean interests. For the philological analysis of the passage see Van Dam 1984, pp. 272-273 and Newlands 2011, p. 154 *ad loc.*; see also Corti 1991, p. 200, n. 24.

<sup>449</sup> Hardie 1983, pp. 67-68, Van Dam 1984, pp. 192-193; Nisbet-Hubbard 1978b, p. 4.

(...) nos, vilis turba, caducis  
deservire bonis semperque optare parati  
spargimur in casus: celsa tu mentis ab arce  
despicias errantes humanaque gaudia rides.

The *laudandus* is identified with the traditional image of the wise man who watches the mankind being attracted by worldly illusions<sup>450</sup> from the safety of his *arx*, intended here both literally (*i.e.* Pollius Felix's villa) and metaphorically, as a state of mind (*celsa...mentis ab arce*). The contrast between the patron and the other mortals is also stressed by the lexicon employed. The imperturbability allows him to face death peacefully, as it is stated at vv. 128-129 (*abire paratum/ad plenum vita*), while the other men (including Statius) are only prepared to accumulate goods and have false hopes (*caducis/deservire bonis semperque optare parati*). Statius continues his analysis of the human attitude towards life also by stating how men are at the mercy of chance (*spargimur in casus*), whilst the Epicurean sage cannot be surprised by death (vv.127-128 *non in turbine rerum/deprendet suprema dies*).

The context presented by Statius bears obvious resemblances in particular with the Epicurean *Weltanschauung* offered by Lucretius, even if with less 'dramatic' tones. The different attitude of the Neapolitan poet derives in fact from the light and non-didactic character of the *Silvae*, whose ultimate aim is not to give instructions, but to praise the addressees. Therefore, the encomiastic purpose leads the poet to abandon 'teaching' tones and to replace the figure of the wise poet with that of the patron. An example of the different attitude of Statius towards the subject matter is given at v. 132: *despicias*<sup>451</sup> *errantes humanaque gaudia rides*. The identification of Pollius Felix with an Epicurean sage reaches a hyperbolic climax when he not only deplores human *errores*, as in Lucretius, but earthly *gaudia* too. In this sense, his position appears to be more human but superior at the same time, as it reveals the inconsistency of worldly pleasures and their distance from the true Epicurean *hedonè*.

Such a portrait of a patron could appear contradictory, since his philosophical superiority coexists with material possessions which are considered superfluous. In the idealized frame of the encomium, wealth is only a reflection of an inner depth, as it is for the villa. According to the Epicurean doctrine, the desire and possession of goods not only avert men from imperturbability,

<sup>450</sup> The *topos* is well-known since Empedocles, 4.8, as noted by Van Dam 1984, p. 270, *ad* v. 131; for some other examples, see *e.g.* Horace, *Carm.* 2.6, 21 *ille te mecum locus beatae postulant arces*, on which see Nisbet-Hubbard 1970 *ad loc.*; see also *Serm.* 2.6, 16 ff. *ergo ubi me in montes et in arcem ex urbi removi...nec mala me ambitio perdit nec plumbeus auster/autumnusque gravis, Libitinae quaestus acerbae*. Cfr. also App. Verg., *Ciris*, 14 *si me iam summa sapientia pangeret arce...unde hominum errores...despicere atque humiles possem contemnere curas*; See finally Seneca, *Ep.* 82.5, 3-4 *in insuperabili loco stat animus qui externa deseruit et arce sua vindicat*.

<sup>451</sup> The translation given by Shackleton Bailey 2003, p. 133 "look down" does not quite capture the sense of *despicio*. Cf. *OLD*, s.v *despicio*, p. 527, 2a: "to look down with disdain".

but increase the fear of death<sup>452</sup>. Pollius Felix instead can wait for his final day with no preoccupations, since his Epicureanism allows him to enjoy his wealth with the right sense of measure<sup>453</sup>. Statius remarks the identification of the *laudandus* with a follower of Epicurus in the final part of the *silva*, before the final *laudatio* (139-142):

(...) illo alii rursus iactantur in alto,  
sed tua securos portus placidamque quietem  
intravit non quassa ratis. sic perge, nec umquam  
emeritam in nostras puppem demitte procellas.

Two traditional metaphors are exploited in this passage: the identification of the peace of mind with a safe harbour, and the assimilation of man to a ship that goes ashore after a perilous journey in the sea. The patron has metaphorically reached with his ship *securus portus*, whilst the *vilis turba*<sup>454</sup> is still facing sea storms (*nostras procellas*). The image developed here pictures Pollius watching other men fighting the hostile waves (*i. e.* human passions and desires), while he is safely far from them on the shore.<sup>455</sup> The tranquillity of the sea (v. 13 *placido recessu*) reflecting Pollius' serenity at the beginning of the poem (v. 10 *placidus*) acquires here a deeper meaning, as it symbolises the detachment from passions and earthly possessions. In these verses, Statius marks a neat distinction between political career and private life: if the former is avoided for its incompatibility with Epicureanism, *otium* instead represents the best instrument for putting one's philosophical and poetic aspirations in practise. However, this interpretation of *otium* cannot resolve entirely the contradiction with the presence of *luxus*. As Rossella Corti has pointed out, "l'adesione alla filosofia epicurea non toglie agli amici di Stazio la prerogative di godere di un tipo di vita magnifico e lussuoso".<sup>456</sup> Although some circumspection around this interpretation of luxury persists, its influence on the concept of *otium* is undeniable. From what we have seen, *otium* is

<sup>452</sup> The Epicurean philosopher therefore must not fear death. Cfr. *e.g.* Lucr. 3.870 ff; 3.1076-1094, especially vv. 1076-1079 *denique tanto opera in dubiis trepidare periclis/quae mala nos subigit vitae tanta cupido?/certe equidem finis vitae mortalibus adstat/nec devitari letum pote, quin obeamus*. In a similar way, he has to be aware of the inconsistency and uselessness of material goods: Lucr. 3.59-64 *denique avarities et honorum caeca cupido,/quae miseros homines cogunt transcendere fines/iuris et inter dum socios scelerum atque ministros/noctes atque dies niti praestante labore/ad summas emergere opes, haec vulnera vitae/non minimam partem mortis formidine aluntur*.

<sup>453</sup> Cfr. Zeiner 2005, pp. 184-185.

<sup>454</sup> This is how Statius defines himself and mankind. Cfr. also *Silv.* 5.1, 20 *vilis turba*; Verg., *Aen.* 11, 372 *nos animae viles/inhumata inflataque turba*; Lucan, 5, 683 *viles animas*.

<sup>455</sup> Statius reprises a *topos* exploited in his philosophical traits by Lucretius, as I analyse *infra*. However, its roots go back to archaic Greek poetry. On this Lotito 2001, pp. 15 ff. is useful. The allegory of the ship is also employed to describe a compromised political situation. Some significant examples are Alcaeus, fr. 208, 1-15 Voigt and 6, 1-14 Lobel-Page; Theogn., *Eleg.* 1, 667-682; Hor., *Carm.* 1.14, for which see also the introduction in Nisbet-Hubbard 1970, pp. 178-182. The metaphor of the 'ship-of-state' is also common in Cicero's speeches, *e.g.* *Pro Sexto Roscio*, ll. 51, 79 and 80. On the analysis of this metaphor in Statius cfr. Van Dam 1984, pp. 274-275 and Newlands 2011, p. 154-155 *ad vv.* 139-142 and Newlands 2002, pp. 172-173.

<sup>456</sup> Corti 1991, p. 201.

intended as a spiritual, intellectual and literary quest for inner *quies*, on the base of Epicureanism. However, this *iter* can be distinguished from the philosophical meaning of achieving *sapientia* (as for Seneca), as it can be interpreted as a way of living. The *formulae* used to describe the activities of the patrons suggest a daily continuity<sup>457</sup>, opposed to a political career. The role of luxury is relevant for this purpose, since it allows the patrons to transform their villas into ideal settings for poetic and philosophical meditations. Within this frame, Statius finds a fertile space for promoting his own poetry, while at the same time encouraging the patrons to cultivate literary interests and be associated with a popular poet. It will be clear how the mechanisms of *beneficia* are once again employed here by Statius to negotiate his social status as encomiastic poet.

At this point, it needs to be noted that in the *Silvae* the interpretation of *otium* in the more traditional sense of *remissio animi* is not completely excluded. The mention of ‘leisure’ activities in poems dedicated to *virī negotiosi* is relevant for Statius’ self-representation as a poet. This is the case of *Silv.* 4.4, an epistle dedicated to Vitorius Marcellus, a figure of political relevance under Domitian<sup>458</sup>. The poet presents his own poetic activity as a form of *otium*, opposed to what is conceived as the main occupation for a *civis Romanus*, *i. e.* political duties (*negotium*). In other words, the traditional hierarchy between *otium* and *negotium* is restored.

Statius shows approval for the life style of many of his patrons and friends (Manilius Vopiscus, Pollius Felix, Vibius Vindex, Claudius Etruscus), who prefer the practice of literary and philosophical *otia* to a political career. However, in his role as an encomiast, he also praises the dedication of Marcellus to the empire. What is interesting to notice here is how the poet always manages to include himself in the picture, according to both the meanings given to *otium*.

The encouragement of the poet to suspend the forensic activity in favour of a period of relaxation, far from the noises of the city, is offered to Marcellus through three *exempla*: the Parthian soldier who sheathes his weapons (vv. 30-31), the charioteer from Delphi who takes care of his horses (vv. 31-32) and finally Statius himself, in the act of putting away the lyre (32-35): *nostra fatiscit/laxaturque chelys. Vires instigat alitque tempestiva quies*<sup>459</sup>; *maior post otia virtus*. In the last metaphor, poetry represents Statius’ own *negotium*, which he can occasionally interrupt for gaining more inspiration. Kathleen Coleman<sup>460</sup> argues that “*laxatur...chelys* must imply that St. temporarily ceases to write any poetry at all, rather than that he suspends epic so as to relax with

<sup>457</sup> Cfr. *e.g.* *Silv.* 2.2, 133-139 *tempus erat...at nunc*; the epic *iunctura tempus erat* sets the political activity of Pollius in the distant past, to which the present *otia* (at *nunc*) are opposed. For the epic occurrences of the expression *tempus erat* in epic poetry see Van Dam 1983, p. 271 and Newlands 2011, p. 153 *ad loc.*

<sup>458</sup> See the introduction to the poem in Coleman 1988, pp. 135-138. Hardie 1983, pp. 165-171 reads the epistle in a comparison with the discussion of *otium* and *negotium* in Seneca’s *De tranquillitate animi*.

<sup>459</sup> The Statian *iunctura* probably reprises Valerius Maximus, *De otio*, 8, 8 *tempestiva intermissione laboris*. In the following verses, the poet develops a similar idea of *otium* as a necessary moment to recover for one’s own *negotium*.

<sup>460</sup> Coleman 1988, p. 144 *ad loc.*



lesser genres". However, the expression could be intended literally as unstringing the lyre when not in use, as lyres benefit from being rested, whereas poets do not necessarily benefit from ceasing to compose poetry. Besides, it has been noted how Statius always portrays himself as a 'singer', and often identified with his instrument<sup>461</sup>. After establishing the respective fields, the poet compares his own literary activity with Marcellus' *officia* (vv. 46-51):

Felix curarum, cui non Heliconia cordi  
serta nec imbelles Parnasi e vertice laurus,  
sed viget ingenium et magnos accinctus in usus  
fert animus quascumque vices. nos otia vitae  
solamur cantu ventosaeque gaudia famae  
quaerimus. (...)

The expression Statius uses to define the *laudandus*' mood (*felix curarum*) hints to the commitment of Marcellus to his *negotia*.<sup>462</sup> Statius employs the image of the *laurus imbellis*<sup>463</sup> as the symbol *par excellence* of poetry, as the poet lessens the importance of his role to enhance Marcellus'.<sup>464</sup> The apparent inferiority of literary *otium* compared to the political and forensic activities of Marcellus is also determined by the opportunity to acquire fame. According to the traditional *topos* of the changeable nature of fortune, the poet can only aspire (*quaerimus*) to a vain poetic glory (*ventosa gaudia famae*<sup>465</sup>), while Marcellus can enjoy his successes in court and his oratorical skills (*ingenium*), and therefore rejecting poetic laurels (*non.../serta nec imbelles...laurus*). However, at the same time, Statius acknowledges his poetry as successful in its own respect (*gaudia famae*). In the following verses, Statius portrays himself in the act of visiting Virgil's tomb in Naples to gain poetic inspiration (vv. 51-55). At the same time, Marcellus is imagined while he prepares for the difficult task of commanding the imperial troops at the borders of the empire (56-64).

The deep gap set between the patron's *negotium* and the poet's *otium* serves the encomiastic aim of the epistle, but it is only apparent. Statius in fact portrays himself again in the act of playing

<sup>461</sup> See Rosati 2013 (forthcoming).

<sup>462</sup> It is interesting to note that in *Tr.* 2, 215-220, Ovid employs the term *curae* to refer to Augustus' political concerns as opposed to his own poetic works. For a critical interpretation of this passage cfr. Williams 1994, pp. 187-188.

<sup>463</sup> The image recalls Horace's apology of Maecenas in *Epod.* 1, 15-16 *roges, tuum labore quid iuvem meo, / imbellis ac firmus parum?*. The passage shares also some thematic similarities with *Silv.* 4.4, as Horace wonders if he would be more useful to his friend Maecenas (about to go on a military campaign with Caesar) by staying in Rome writing poetry or by following him: *utrumne iussi persequemur otium, / non dulce, ni tecum simul, / an hunc laborem, mente laturi decet / qua ferre non mollis viros?*. On the similar image employed in *Silv.* 3.2 see pp. 163-164. For the image of the lyre associated with Statius see Rosati 2013 (forthcoming).

<sup>464</sup> The opposition between literary *otium* and politics recalls again the end of the *Georgics* (4, 559-566): *haec super arborum cultu pecorumque canebam / et super arboribus, Caesar dum magnus ad altum / fulminat Euphraten bello victorque volentis / per populos dat iura viamque adfectat Olympo. / illo Vergilium me tempore dulcis alebat / Parthenope studiis florentem ignobilis oti, / carmina qui lusi pastorum audaxque iuventa, / Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi.*

<sup>465</sup> Cfr. also Horace, *Epist.* 2.1, 177 (on theatre): *quem tulit ad scaenam ventoso gloria curra / exanimat lentus spectator, sedulus inflat.* Similarly the Statian expression *ventosa gaudia* associates the mutability of the wind to fame. Cfr. also Coleman 1988, p. 147 *ad loc.* For an analysis of the *silva* as a 'Horatian epistle' see Kerschner 2008, pp. 141-154.

his lyre (*tenuis ignavo police chordas/pulso*), and promotes himself as a successor of Virgil, thus claiming his fame as a professional poet. The idea of *vates* in its ability of foresee is also employed here in how Statius prophesies the future military successes of Marcellus. In line with this strategy, Statius reserves a role for himself in the busy life of the *vir negotiosus* (vv. 69-70):

(...) nos facta aliena canendo  
 vergimus in senium: propriis tu pulcher in armis  
 ipse canenda geres (...)

Even if the poet still marks the superiority of actions over the literature which praises them, he can project the eternising power of poetry in the future<sup>466</sup>, and promote himself to celebrate the great successes of Marcellus and make them immortal<sup>467</sup>. In this way, the strong connection between poetic subject and object is also reinforced by the use of the same verb: Statius portrays himself in an active role (*canendo*), while Marcellus' actions are presented as the object (*canenda*).

As we have seen in other passages of the *Silvae*, Statius reserves the last part of the poem for his own poetic pride, even when the patron does not practice poetry himself (as in the case of Marcellus). Alongside offering his poetic skills for singing Marcellus' praise, in the last part of the *silva* Statius includes also an open self-promotion when he informs Marcellus on the progress of his literary activity (vv. 87-100):

Nunc si forte meis quae sint exordia musis  
 scire petis, iam Sidonios emensa labores  
 Thebais optato collegit carbasa portu  
 Parnasique iugis silvaeque Heliconide festis  
 tura dedit flammis et virginis exta iuvencae  
 votiferaque meas suspendit ab arbore vittas.  
 nunc vacuos crines alio subit infula nexu:  
 Troia quidem magnusque mihi temptatur Achilles,  
 sed vocat arcitenens alio pater armaque monstrat  
 Ausonii maiora ducis. trahit impetus illo  
 iam pridem retrahitque timor. stabuntne sub illa  
 mole umeri an magno vincetur pondere cervix?  
 dic, Marcelle, feram? fluctus an sueta minores  
 nosse ratis nondum Ioniis credenda periclis?

<sup>466</sup> The age gap offers another encomiastic point for Marcellus, who is still young (*pulcher*), whilst Statius is on the threshold of old age (*verginus in senium*).

<sup>467</sup> The *topos* is of course well attested: cfr. e.g. Prop. 3.9; Verg., *Georg.* 4, 459 ff.; Ovid, *Pont.* 4.8, 71 *sed dare materiam nobis quam carmina maius*.

The strategy employed aims to portray Marcellus as an affectionate reader<sup>468</sup> who is interested in Statius' works (*si meis quae sint exordia musis/scire petis*), and gives an opportunity to the poet to mention his literary projects: the completion of the *Thebaid* (...*iam Sidonios emensa labores/Thebais*) and the commencement of the *Achilleid* (...*magnusque mihi temptatur Achilles*). The final two direct questions point at the embarrassment and sense of inadequacy for composing an epic poem celebrating Domitian's military glory<sup>469</sup>. The appeal to Marcellus could be read as an interesting 'testing' of ideas for his future poetic production. As usual Statius pushes the boundaries of encomium and creates an open dialogue with his addressee in order to promote his own poetry.

In this sense, Statius employs his encomiastic strategy even when the addressee is not personally involved in such type of literary performances, but can still act as a patron of arts. As we have seen in this analysis, multiple factors shape Statius' depiction of the praise of literary amateurs. The acknowledgement of the presence of dilettanti in the artistic scenario of the empire appears to be necessary for the professional poet who aspires to maintain his official role. In a period where the successful formula employed by Maecenas and the Augustan poets is no longer applicable, in the *Silvae* Statius promotes forms of private patronage. If the phenomenon of literary amateurs is not new in itself, a novelty is represented by the self-consciousness of the professional poet, who more than in the past has to claim the importance of his own literary activity. In this sense, the praise of activities of leisure pursued by the *patroni* represents an efficient strategy of negotiating the role of the poet in the Flavian age.

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In this third chapter of my thesis, I have analysed different themes and genres within the frame of more private poems. In the discussion of *Silv.* 2.1, I have pointed out the way in which the idealisation of Glaucias corresponds to a specific aesthetic and ethic model that can also be found in epic, and in which terms it differs from the portrait of Earinus (*Silv.* 3.4). I have also showed how the praise of Glaucias reflects the encomium of the dedicatee Atedius Melior.

With *Silv.* 3.2 I have focused more on generic influences from elegy. The borrowing of similar expressions in the context of a *propemptikon* has been interpreted as a strategy of the poet to promote intimacy with his patron and friend, and promote his own poetry. The presence of a mutual lexicon between love and encomiastic poetry is a pivotal aspect of literature of the empire (both public and private), where the language of *amor* and *amicitia* become more and more important to promote an ideal of social equality in an increasingly autocratic society.

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<sup>468</sup> Rosati 2013 (forthcoming).

<sup>469</sup> On this issue cfr. Rosati 2013, *ibidem*, and Rosati 2002a, pp. 235-236.

Finally, the examination of *Silv.* 1.3, 2.2 and 4.4 has explored the theme of literary patronage, and how Statius negotiates his role of professional poet with patrons who have retired from the public scene (*Silv.* 1.3, 2.2) and those who are still in the profession (*Silv.* 4.4). In each situation the shared cultural interests make the professional poet the ideal ‘voice’ for the encomium of the rich patrons. In the last chapter of my thesis I will refer again to this section in an intertextual comparison with Juvenal’s interpretation of the phenomenon of literary patronage.

#### 4. Tearing away the mask?

A discussion of Statius' *Silvae* would not be complete without an examination of its connections with the imperial literature of praise and blame which flourished after the reign of Domitian. The most important encomiastic work produced under Trajan is the *Panegyricus Traiani* of Pliny the Younger. In the Trajanic and Hadrianic era, to patent forms of praise of the current regime seems to correspond a unanimous condemnation of the years of Domitian<sup>470</sup>. For this reason, the eulogy for Trajan is based on a punctual opposition with his predecessor. The limits set to the present work will not permit a detailed analysis of the encomiastic strategy employed in Pliny's *Panegyric*<sup>471</sup>; therefore I will only make some considerations relevant to our discourse.

In a recent contribution, Bruce Gibson has pointed out how the language of praise employed by Pliny preserves most of the traditional features of imperial encomia<sup>472</sup>. The anxiety of writing a panegyric after the experimentations with the genre of Statius and Martial leads Pliny to profess the sincerity of his praise and the absence of flattery (1.6): *utque quae dicentur a me, libertas fides veritas constet, tantumque a specie adulationis absit gratiarum actio mea quantum abest a necessitate*. This last aspect is important in giving us an idea of the 'bad reputation' that encomia had developed since the years of Domitian. The identification of flattery as the language of praise of 'bad' emperors signals Pliny's attempt to distance Trajan from previous models. However, in the *Panegyric* some of the *topoi* for the imperial praise that we have seen in the *Silvae* are employed for the eulogy of Trajan: the ideal prince (4); the emperor portrayed as lover of peace and *pater patriae* (16-21); moderation and assurance of immortality (55); Trajan as Jupiter on earth (80). Even if it is pretentiously professed as genuine compared to the ambiguities of Statius and Martial, the language of imperial praise remains the same. The unsuccessful attempt of Pliny to restore a sincere praise becomes less viable than employing flattery, which had become an integral part of the imperial propaganda. This reflection is even more relevant if one thinks of the traditional opposition between prose and poetry panegyrics. It is interesting to notice in fact how Pliny employs a code of formulae developed mostly in poetic encomia, despite the traditional claim that prose panegyrics do not use figured language (Isocrates, *Ev.* 9-10).

Paradoxically, the *Panegyricus* helps establish the language of praise developed under Domitian as the only viable for dealing with an autocratic power.

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<sup>470</sup> Ramage 1989 insists (maybe excessively) on the identification of blame of the previous emperor with indirect praise of the new. Cfr. Hardie 1998 for a proposed Hadrianic dating of *Satire* 4.

<sup>471</sup> As I have previously mentioned in the introduction, few new contributions to the study of the *Panegyric* are worth mentioning for further reading: Roche 2011 and now also Rees 2012, pp. 77-220. A new edition and commentary of the *Panegyric* by Gibson is forthcoming.

<sup>472</sup> Gibson 2011, pp. 104-124.

## Juvenal's *Satire 5*: the anti-*cena* of *Silv.* 4.2 and 1.6

In this cultural context, Juvenal also expresses a reaction to the world of encomia and Domitianic literature. The poignant *indignatio* of the *Satires* in fact has long been interpreted as a reaction to the last years of the Flavian dynasty<sup>473</sup>. The critical position assumed by the poet against Domitian has been recognized as a recurrent motif of the *Satires*, as the moral, cultural and social decay portrayed in the collection seems to apply to his reign in particular.

Juvenal's alignment with the anti-Domitianic propaganda has been broadly examined by the scholarship in its historical and cultural aspects. However, the relationship between the *Satires* and the literary productions of the Flavian era seems to leave space for further analysis.

The concept of anti-propaganda is in fact a key factor when examining the *Satires* as a literary 'reaction' to the literature that flourished under Domitian. The poetic productions of Martial and Statius seem particularly relevant in this context, as they represent the best literary examples of the propagandistic phenomenon attacked by Juvenal in his poems.

There is no doubt that the poet's criticism towards the world of the court of Domitian is patent and recurrent throughout the entire collection, with obvious examples (*Satire 4*)<sup>474</sup>. Therefore, one could wonder if this critical position towards Domitianic culture can be traced on a textual level. Is the anti-propagandistic attitude of Juvenal a response to the poetry of praise of Martial and Statius? The criticism of the decay of the patron-client relationship is the most evident connection between our authors. However, while the influence of the *Epigrams* on the *Satires* has been observed, less attention seems to have been paid to the presence of the Statius' *Silvae* in the collection.

My aim in this chapter is to examine some intertextual allusions between the *Silvae* and the *Satires*. The presence of mutual themes and situation leads to the challenging idea that the *Satires* might have been a response to encomiastic poetry and Statius in particular.

The theme of the *cena* features prominently in the *Satires*, where three poems deal with the topics of food and dinner invitations (*Sat.* 4, 5 and 11). The sphere of dinner-parties and food consumption is particularly relevant in the genre of the satire, because "more than any other literary genre deals with the body and bodily functions, of which the consumption of food and drink are primary examples, as part of its celebration of the carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1968)"<sup>475</sup>. Besides its immediate relevance to satirical literature, the theme applies to the present discussion as a

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<sup>473</sup> Cfr. however Ramelli 2000 for an analysis on Juvenal's opposition to the empire in a broader sense.

<sup>474</sup> More recently, cfr. Powell 2010 on the figures of the *delatores* in *Sat.* 3.

<sup>475</sup> Braund 1996, p. 304.

representation of social interactions<sup>476</sup>. In particular, dinner-parties open a window on the patron-client relationships and, specifically in Juvenal, on their corruption. However, one needs to be reminded of the polarizing nature of satire, where the subject-matter of a dinner can be treated in different ways. As Susanna Braund has noted, “in the hands of the satirists the *cena* becomes a nightmare, in which folly, vulgarity and viciousness are paraded, or, much more rarely, a vehicle of fantasy in which simplicity and a return to traditional values are advocated”<sup>477</sup>.

Nonetheless, the satirical treatment of this subject-matter by Juvenal could mean more than a general condemnation of the degeneration of social relationships. If one reads satire as an amplified form of blame, one could wonder how it relates to its literary counterpart, *i. e.* literature of praise. The theme of the *cena* seems particularly promising in this context, for such occasions can be represented as a positive or negative social display of the patron-client relationship. Whilst in Juvenal the latter attitude seems to prevail, it is interesting to analyse how Martial and Statius approach the same topic. As mentioned in the introduction, previous scholarship has noted how Martial’s humorous portraits of the client complaining for the different treatment at dinner can be compared with Juvenal’s<sup>478</sup>.

Therefore, in this first section of the last chapter I will analyse *Satire 5* in connection with *Silv.* 4.2 and 1.6, as the three poems portray three different dinner-party occasions<sup>479</sup>. In the satire, a patron-client relationship is displayed, whilst the *Silvae* describe the feast thrown by Domitian during the celebration of the *Saturnalia* (1.6) and a personal invitation of the poet to an imperial *cena* (4.2). It will be apparent to the reader how Juvenal and Statius feature two very different characters, the private patron Virro and the emperor respectively. However, the portrayal of the patron in Juvenal refers to a specific satirical image of the private patron who behaves like a monarch in his own household. If we are to interpret the satire in this light, the analysis of the character of Virro offers elements of reflection for a comparison with the imperial praise of Statius. In addition to that, the Trajanic setting of the satire needs to be taken into account in Juvenal’s interpretation of power dynamics. Statius and Juvenal presents opposite portrayals of dinner hosts, and offer a fundamental testimony of how power is perceived during the reign of Domitian and Trajan respectively.

A consistent presence of intertextual references to the *Silvae* suggests that *Satire 5* could be read as an indirect response to more celebratory descriptions of dinner-parties. In particular, the

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<sup>476</sup> Gowers 1993, pp. 25-6.

<sup>477</sup> Braund 1996, p. 305.

<sup>478</sup> Cfr. Courtney 1980, p. 231 for the mention of some passages from the *Epigrams*, and Morford 1977.

<sup>479</sup> Cfr. Malamud 2007 and McCullough 2008-9 for some useful considerations, despite their general negative interpretation of Domitian’s aloofness as a dinner host.

attention to the details of the menu that could be easily ascribed to the rules of the satirical genre, could be interpreted in opposition to the more allegoric descriptions in the *Silvae* (4.2 in particular).

Other details hint to Juvenal's humorous employment of traditional elements of praise in a dining context, like the transfiguration of the waiters and cupbearers into Ganymedes, and the transformation of wine into nectar. In portraying Virro as a monarch, Juvenal seems to satirise a specific image of a bad ruler within the frame of the household, as a domestic application of the type of monarch the official Trajanic propaganda tried to leave in the past. In a way, the condemnation of tyrannical behaviour in the patron-client relationship becomes an application of a *topos* of the current regime to a private context.

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The discussion of the three poems will benefit from a brief presentation of their main points. *Silv.* 1.6 is a hendecasyllabic poem dedicated to the celebration of the *Saturnalia* offered by the emperor Domitian to the people of Rome; the festivity includes games, spectacles, gifts and banquets. Statius describes the scenes as a member of the audience, and registers the sequence of prodigies displayed by the emperor. *Silv.* 4.2, as we have seen already in its analysis, presents a different convivial occasion, a dinner-party at the court of Domitian, in which Statius participates. The poem celebrates the amenities of the palace and the *grandeur* of the imperial figure. Although the two poems differ in metre, style and tones, the encomiastic strategy aims to portray Domitian as the ideal ruler: his divine nature is praised in its public display, but counterbalanced by constant proof of *modestia* and *aequitas*<sup>480</sup>.

The fifth satire of Juvenal also describes an invitation of a client (Trebius) to a dinner hosted by his patron (Virro). The fact that the names are not revealed until lines 19 and 39 respectively, and not much is known about them<sup>481</sup> would suggest they represent literary *personae*. The poem describes the dinner with detailed descriptions of the food and wine served; the menu in fact represents the main structure of the poem. Through the two different menus offered to Virro and Trebius, Juvenal condemns the decline of hospitality and reciprocity in the patron-client relationship. The aim of describing a banquet is therefore very different from Statius: whereas Juvenal stresses the degree of separation and aloofness of the host, the Flavian poet remarks Domitian's hospitality and generosity<sup>482</sup>.

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<sup>480</sup> The two poems feature in Newlands 2002, chapt. 7 and 8 as different public manifestations of Domitian's authority.

<sup>481</sup> See Braund 1996, p. 280 and 284 *ad loc.*

<sup>482</sup> Pace the negative interpretations of these poems as a sign of Domitian's aloofness: Newlands 2002, chapters 7 and 8; Malamud 2007 and McCullough 2008-9, pp. 155-158.



The first aspect which casts a negative light on Virro's dinner is its inequity, mentioned in the very first lines of the satire (vv. 3-4): *si potes illa pati quae nec Sarmentus iniquas/Caesaris ad mensas nec vilis Gabba tulisset*. The finger of the satirist is pointed right from the start to the hierarchical nature of the dinner, where the patron will enjoy a different treatment from the client. In this context, the use of *Caesar* carries imperial suggestions, as it refers to Augustus. The situation describes the inferior treatment of the *scurrae* (Sarmentus and Gabba) during feasts. The paradoxical comparison mirrors the reality of dinner invitations in the imperial age, where clients are regarded in a similar way.

In the first lines of *Silv.* 4.2, Statius declares his astonishment for being invited to dine with Domitian, who has blessed him with this high honour (vv. 5-6): *ast ego cui sacrae Caesar nova gaudia cenae/nunc primum dominamque dedit contingere mensam* (...). The implications of such invitation are stressed by the religious and political terms, which enhance Domitian's role as patron *par excellence*. On the other hand, the poet acknowledges the extraordinary privilege the emperor has given him (*dedit*) to 'make it' to the imperial dinner-table (*contingere*)<sup>483</sup>. On the contrary, Juvenal asks polemically if the client regards as 'the highest good' (v. 2 *bona summa putes*) such dinner invitations (v. 2 *aliena...quadra*). Differently from Statius' *sacra mensa*, Juvenal deliberately lowers the tones and dinner is turned into sharing a stranger's loaf of bread. The sacred context created by Statius is brought back to the harsh reality of the client's life by employing a similar language of power; but while in Statius such language stresses a social privilege, in Juvenal it reveals social inequities.

The polemical definition of the *mensa* as *iniqua* (vv. 3-4) plays with an encomiastic *topos* exploited by authors of literature of praise. In a world where there are no social boundaries, the idea of superiors and inferiors sharing the same meal is often seen as a sign of a good ruler, for it manifests the emperor's *clementia* and *aequitas*. In Statius' *Silv.* 1.6, the poet remarks the conviviality shared by the people of Rome dining at the same table (vv. 43-44): *una vescitur omnis ordo mensa,/parvi, femina, plebs, eques, senatus*; (v. 48) *nobiscum socias dapes inisti*.

Similarly, in his *Panegyricus Traiani*, Pliny stresses the emperor's hospitality (49.5): *non tibi semper in medio cibus semperque mensa communis?*. Therefore, one could see how the imperial allusion in the satire (*Caesaris*) is not only a reference to the progressive social decay from Augustan times, but satirizes the specific claim of equity made by the imperial power.

The first lines of the satire set the general tones for the rest of the poem. In lines 12-19 Juvenal unfolds his view on dinner invitations and reveals the truth behind them:

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<sup>483</sup> So Coleman 1988, p. 86 *ad loc.*

primo fige loco, quod tu *discumbere iussus*  
mercedem solidam veterum capis officiorum.  
fructus amicitiae magnae cibus: inputat hunc *rex*,  
et quamvis rarum tamen inputat. ergo duos post  
si libuit menses neglectum adhibere clientem,  
tertia ne vacuo cessaret culcita lecto,  
'*una simus*' ait. *votorum summa. quid ultra*  
*quaeris?* (...)

The dinner is described as an insulting consolation for the client, who just receives food in exchange of their *servitium* (*fructus amicitiae magnae cibus*). Moreover, the patron-client relationship is portrayed in its most practical terms<sup>484</sup> and the social gap existing between the two figures is clearly expressed.

However, at a closer reading the sarcasm of the passage seems to mock the attitude of bewilderment and excitement usually shown by the guests in these occasions. An excellent comparison is again offered by Statius in *Silv.* 4.2 (vv. 7-17):

qua celebrem mea vota lyra, quas solvere grates  
sufficiam? non, si pariter mihi vertice laeto  
nectat odoratas et Smyrna et Mantua lauros,  
digna loquar. *mediis videor discumbere in astris*  
(...)  
*haec aevi mihi prima dies, hic limina vitae.*  
*tene ego, regnator terrarum orbisque subacti*  
*magne parens, te, spes hominum, te, cura deorum,*  
*cerno iacens?* datur haec iuxta, datur ora tueri  
vina inter mensasque, et *non adsurgere fas est?*

The *cena* that is disregarded as a cheap consolation in Juvenal, here becomes a gift that is hard to reciprocate for the poet (*quas solvere grates/sufficiam?*), not even if Homer or Virgil composed poetry for the occasion. If Juvenal polemically deprives the invitation of any social relevance of interest from the patron, Statius on the other hand exaggerates its meaning and declares his poetic inability to do justice to it (*non...digna loquar*). The tyrannical nature of the banquet offered by Virro (*rex*) is transfigured by Statius in a divine setting (*mediis...in astris*) where Domitian is praised both in his human and heavenly attributes (*regnator terrarum orbisque...magne parens, spes hominum...cura deorum*). The poet imagines himself as participating in a divine banquet (*mediis videor discumbere in astris*). *Videor* stresses the central position of the poet, who feels like he is dining with the stars. The same verb acquires a very different meaning towards the end of

<sup>484</sup> Braund 1996, p. 278 *ad* vv. 12-23: "their mercenary relationship is reflected in the vocabulary associated with counting and accountancy".

*Satire 5*, where it sums up Trebius' illusion to be at the same level as the host Virro (vv. 161-162): *tu tibi liber homo et regis conviva videris*. Unlike in Statius, where it hints to the divine setting of the imperial banquet, *videris* conveys here a sense of self-delusion for the client, who *thinks* he is a free man dining with a *rex*<sup>485</sup>. Juvenal's condemnation of such naivety refers to the specific encomiastic *topos* of claiming intimacy with a superior. If in *Silv.* 4.2, 10 it is the poet who is elevated to a divine level, in *Silv.* 1.6, 49-50 the people celebrating the emperor's *Saturnalia* can claim to be his guests:

Iam se, quisquis is est, inops beatus,  
*convivam ducis esse gloriatur.*

While Trebius is stuck in the wrong assumption he is socially equal to Virro, here every person in Rome can safely declare to be dining with Domitian. Besides the obvious encomiastic intent, it is interesting to note how Juvenal consistently satirizes about motifs of literature of praise by engaging with the same language.

Going back to our initial passage from the *silva*, the poet's incredulity that he can remain seated in front of the emperor (*tene ego...cerno iacens?*; *non adsurgere fas est?*) contrasts sharply with Trebius, who is forced to sit on the lowest place on the couch (*tertia ne vacuo cessaret culcita lecto*).

In the reported passage from *Satire 5*, Juvenal inserts one of the few pieces of direct speech in the poem<sup>486</sup>, in which the patron sarcastically invites his client to share an informal dinner (v. 18 *una simus...votorum summa! Quid ultra quaeris?*). The false egalitarianism professed in these lines echoes Statius' juxtaposition with Domitian (*tene ego*). Following the mention of Trebius' lower position on the *triclinium*, Virro's claim of social equity sounds like an insult. Along the same lines, the privilege of sitting at the same table should be regarded as an extraordinary dream-like moment for the client (*votorum summa!*). In a similar way (but with an opposite meaning), Statius acknowledges the occasion as a metaphorical new birth (v. 13 *haec aevi mihi prima dies, hic limina vitae*), a new life that Domitian has granted to him as a poet-client<sup>487</sup>.

Despite representing different contexts, the parallel analysis of the two passages still offers an interesting insight into the dynamics of dinner invitations. The recurring intertextual references also show how Juvenal expands some key aspects that in Statius are only alluded to. For example, the encomiast refers to the practice of exchange of *beneficia* as an exciting challenge: the

<sup>485</sup> Nauta 2002, pp. 17-18 notes that "Juvenal speaks of *amicitia* (14), but calls the partners *rex* (14) and *cliens* (16) respectively, thus leaving no doubt about the asymmetry of the relationship".

<sup>486</sup> For a survey on the 'narrative' structure of the poem see Jones 1987.

<sup>487</sup> On this *topos* see Coleman 1988, p. 87 *ad loc.*

declaration of poetic inadequacy to reciprocate Domitian's favours disguises Statius' self-awareness as a court poet. In other words, the relationship between the patron and client is set as an exchange of benefits *ad libitum*: quite appropriate, being the patron the emperor himself. In Juvenal instead, the dinner invitation is seen as an unbalanced gift for an underestimated client (v. 16 *neglectum...clientem*). In a way, the satirist aims to reveal the rules of the game outside the world of the imperial court by dropping the mask of flattery.

After the initial passage in which Juvenal sets the tones and motifs of the satire, he moves onto the main topic of the poem, *i. e.* the dinner and the different menu that is served to Virro and Trebius. The first item to be discussed is wine. The antithesis between patron and client is conveyed through the display of wines and glasses, expensive and valuable for Virro (vv. 30-45), disgusting and cheap for Trebius (vv. 24-25; 46-48); even the water they are served is different (vv. 51-52).

The mention of drinks leads to the description of the waiters, which deserves a closer reading (vv. 52-60):

vos aliam potatis aquam. tibi pocula cursor  
Gaetulus dabit aut nigri manus ossea Mauri  
et cui per mediam nolis occurrere noctem,  
clivosae veheris dum per monumenta Latinae.  
flos Asiae ante ipsum, pretio maiore paratus  
quam fuit et Tulli census pugnacis et Anci  
et, ne te teneam, Romanorum omnia regum  
frivola. Quod cum ita sit, tu *Gaetulum Ganymedem*  
respice, cum sities. (...)

Virro's and Trebius' waiters are very different: the former enjoys the company of an attractive young boy from the East, whilst the latter is given an ugly African boy. The key point of the passage is the oxymoronic expression *Gaetulum Ganymedem*, as it combines paradoxically what Trebius wants but cannot have: a Ganymede like Virro's. The comparison with Jupiter's favourite cupbearer is, of course, traditional<sup>488</sup>, but in the satire it is not employed in a flattering sense. Virro's boy is described as moody and irritable, but such attitude is legitimized by his good looks, young age and price (vv. 60-62): (...) *nescit tot milibus emptus/pauperibus miscere puer; set forma, set aetas/digna supercilio*. One again Juvenal plays with encomiastic *topoi* to fulfill his satirical aims. The comparison with Ganymede plays in fact a key role in imperial panegyric, as it contributes to the identification of the emperor with Jupiter. We have seen already how the representation of the imperial cupbearer Earinus enhances the divine representation of Domitian<sup>489</sup>.

<sup>488</sup> I have discussed the use of this *topos* in the context of the encomium of Earinus in *Silv.* 3.4 in chapt. 2b, pp. 83-84.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibidem*.

In our *silva* 4.2 the divine setting of the banquet imagined by Statius is strengthened by the illusion of being served by Ganymedes (v. 10-12):

(...) mediis videor discumbere in astris  
cum Iove et *Iliaca* porrectum sumere *dextra*  
*immortale merum!* (...)

where the transformation involves the wine too, turned into nectar. In the more formal context of the *Saturnalia* in *Silv.* 1.6, the waiters are described in similar terms (vv. 33-34):

*illi marcida vina largiuntur:*  
*Idaeos totidem putes ministros.*

Juvenal plays with this typical image of imperial panegyric, as Virro's boy meets all the standards of his role. However, the haughtiness displayed sets him apart from positive representations of cupbearers like Earinus in *Silv.* 3.4. Such implication would therefore suggest that it is this specific image of court boys that Juvenal aims to counteract. In adapting the two different types of servants to their masters, Juvenal applies the same strategy we find in Statius, but with comic effects. In the middle of the description of the menu, Juvenal inserts another mention of wine, this time related to the important social act of drinking from the same cup (vv. 127-130):

(...) quando propinat  
Virro tibi sumitve tuis contacta labellis  
pocula? quis vestrum temerarius usque adeo, quis  
perditus, ut dicat regi 'bibe'? (...)

The rhetorical question (*quando*) makes clear that this opportunity is impossible for Trebius. His lips are even described as 'polluted' (*contacta*), thus preventing any contact with Virro. Although this convivial gesture of social equity is denied to the client, in *Silv.* 3.4 the *puer delicatus* of the emperor can claim such a privilege (vv. 60-61):

Care puer superis, qui *praelibare verendum*  
*nectar* et ingentem totiens contingere dextram  
electus (...)

Not only Earinus is allowed to drink from the same cup as Domitian, but he can do it first (*praelibare*), and in the usual divine setting of the imperial court, what he enjoys is not wine, but nectar (*verendum nectar*). The role of the *puer delicatus* in the *silva* adds up erotic tones to this

passage, where the young boy is given the exciting privilege to touch the emperor (*contingere dextram/electus*). It is worth noticing how in the satire Trebius instead is reminded by the speaker to keep his hand off even Virro's bread (v. 71 *dextram cohibere memento*). Despite not being a free-born, Earinus can boast his proximity to Domitian himself, and fulfill the encomiastic role of reflecting the imperial majesty. Once again Statius offers an idealized view of social relationships, where a slave can be closer to the emperor than a client to his patron.

Two other passages from *Sat.* 5 and *Silv.* 1.6 show some interesting connections, when the mention of wine leaves space to bread. Statius describes the numerous servants in the act of bringing bread and napkins to the tables (vv. 28-32):

Ecce autem caveas subit per omnis  
*insignis specie, decora cultu*  
plebes altera non minor sedente.  
Hi *panaria candidasque mappas*  
subvectant epulasque lautiores;

The image conveys an idea of decency and respect, where the food and wine served signify social equity. Furthermore, the idea of order and cleanliness conveyed by the mention of the *candidas mappas* has an interesting parallel in the satire, where bad wine leads to violence (vv. 24-29):

qualis cena tamen! vinum quod sucida nolit  
lana pati: de conviva Corybanta videbis.  
iurgia proludunt, sed mox et pocula torques  
saucius et *rubra* deterges vulnera *mappa*,  
inter vos quotiens libertorumque cohortem  
pugna Saguntina fervet commissa lagona.

The contrasting image of the blood-stained napkins (but in this context *rubra* could also refer to wine) conveys the idea of chaos, where any sign of respectable conviviality is lost. The social order that is granted in the encomiastic poem by the numinous presence of the emperor is turned into a confusing riot in the satire.

Juvenal dedicates more lines to the theme of bread, as further proof of the low consideration of the client (vv. 67-75):

ecce alius quanto porrexit murmure panem  
vix fractum, solidae iam mucida frusta farinae,  
quae genuinum agitent, non admittentia morsum.  
sed tener et niveus mollique siligine fictus  
servatur domino. dextram cohibere memento;

salva sit artoptae reverentia. finge tamen te  
inprobulum, superest illic qui ponere cogat:  
'vis tu consuetis, audax conviva, canistris  
impleri panisque tui novisse colorem?'

Whereas in the Statian passage, bread is simply referred to as 'baskets of bread' (*panaria*) where the use of the plural conveys a sense of abundance and equity, here the offering of a hard and mouldy piece of bread is associated with the social status of Trebius<sup>490</sup>. The servant's hostility (*alius...murmure*) also highlights the feeling of a distorted reality compared to the one offered in encomia.

After the description of the fish and meat courses (Trebius does not in fact receive any meat dish at all), a bitter comment remarks how the client is not even permitted to protest (vv. 125-127). Silence is in fact the only reaction expected from a client, and it is reprised towards the end of the poem, when Trebius cannot but be silent at the unfair treatment he has received (v. 169 *omnes...tacetis*). The context of silence and impotence is central in a famous passage from Cassius Dio on a dinner party given by Domitian, where the description highlights the grim and dark atmosphere of death created by the emperor and the consequent terrified silence of the guests (Dio 67.9.1-3). Pliny makes similar remarks in the *Panegyricus* when he describes Domitian's habit of eating alone and spying on his guests at dinner parties (*Pan.* 49. 6):

Non enim ante medium diem distentus solitaria cena, spectator adnotatorque conuiuiis tuis immines, nec ieiunis et inanibus plenus ipse <et> eructans non tam adponis quam obicis cibos quos dedigneris attingere, aegreque perpessus superbam illam conuictus simulationem, rursus te ad clandestinam ganeam occultumque luxum refers.

The lighter tones of the satire are distant from the extreme pictures drawn by Dio and Pliny<sup>491</sup>, but this passage is relevant in the present analysis to note how a traditional negative trait attributed to Domitian hints to the tyrannical nature of Virro<sup>492</sup>. This alignment of Juvenal with the historical current against the Flavian emperor represents further proof of the relevance of this satire in the intertextual 'dialogue' engaged with forms of encomium for Domitian. A further proof of this connection is made by Juvenal in a more general statement on the degeneration of dinner parties in the programmatic *Satire* 1 (vv. 132-138):

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<sup>490</sup> In *Iul.* 48, Suetonius notes that Caesar threw his baker in jail for serving different types of bread to his guests. Cfr. Morford 1977, p. 225.

<sup>491</sup> Newlands 2002, pp. 261-262 attributes a similar negative representation of the imperial power to the convivial contexts of *Silv.* 1.6 and 4.2.

<sup>492</sup> On the close association between Virro and Domitian see Jones 1987, pp. 150-151.

vestibulis abeunt veteres lassique clientes  
 votaue deponunt, quamquam longissima cenae  
 spes homini; caulis miseris atque ignis emendus.  
 optima silvarum interea pelagique vorabit  
 rex horum vacuisque toris tantum ipse iacebit.  
 nam de tot pulchris et latis orbibus et tam  
 antiquis *una* comedunt patrimonia *mensa*.

The patent opposition between the clients' hunger and the abundance of the patrons' meals anticipates the main theme of *Satire 5*. The accusation goes in two directions: excess in the consumption of food (*vorabit*) and the loss of conviviality (*vacuis...toris...ipse iacebit*), probably the most despicable social act.

In *Satire 5*, aloofness is in fact significantly symbolised by the expensive food Virro is served. The climax is reached in the description of the lobster<sup>493</sup> dish (vv. 80-83):

aspice quam longo distinguat pectore lancem  
 quae fertur domino squilla, et quibus undique saepta  
 asparagis qua *despiciat* convivia cauda,  
 dum venit excelsi manibus sublata ministri.

The crustacean is described in the tyrannical act of *despicere* the other guests from the hands of a tall waiter, thus comically representing Virro's own aloofness. The double menu served at dinner therefore represents the visual display of social inequality.

An opposite situation is to be found in *Silv.* 1.6, where food is described as expensive and abundant, in line with the 'extreme' character of encomia (vv. 9-20):

Vix aurora novos movebat ortus,  
 iam bellaria linea pluebant:  
 hunc rorem veniens profudit eurus.  
 quicquid nobile Ponticis nucetis,  
 fecundis cadit aut iugis Idumes;  
 quod ramis pia germinat Damascos,  
 et quod percoquit †aebosia† Caunos,  
 largis gratuitum cadit rapinis;  
 molles gaioli lucuntulique  
 et massis Amerina non perustis  
 et mustaceus et latente palma  
 praegnantes caryotides cadebant.

<sup>493</sup> This is the translation of *squilla* by Braund 1996, p. 290 *ad loc.* But *squilla* refers more generally to crustaceans: see *OLD*, p. 1812, s.v. *squilla*.



In the idealized frame of the encomium, the provenance of the food from different corners of the empire underlines the power of Domitian<sup>494</sup>. Generosity is also suggested by the use of atmospheric expressions (*pluebant; profudit; cadit; cadit; cadebant*) and the free nature of the gifts (*largis gratuitum cadit rapinis*). In addition to this picture, Statius compares the lavish shower from the roof of the amphitheater of goods to a storm, thus emphasizing the superiority of Domitian to Jupiter, who can ‘only’ send rain down on earth (vv. 21-27):

non tantis Hyas inserena nimbis  
 terras obruit aut soluta Pluas,  
 qualis per cuneos hiems Latinos  
 plebem grandine contudit serena.  
 ducat nubila Iuppiter per orbem  
 et latis pluvias minetur agris,  
 dum nostri Iovis hi ferantur imbres.

Even if we take into consideration the possible threatening nature of the expressions chosen by Statius (*plebem grandine contudit serena*)<sup>495</sup>, the simile conveys an important message which is relevant to our discourse: Domitian’s numinous powers makes him superior to Jupiter, yet his divine nature does not prevent him from sharing expensive food with the people of Rome.

Juvenal indulges in a detailed description of the rich dishes served to Virro to heighten his tyrannical position over Trebius; on the other hand, in Statius the description of fruits and sweets coming from different regions of the empire symbolizes the imperial power and generosity.

Such a rich display of luxury goods could bring upon the host the threat of vanity. The encomiastic poet is obviously careful in stating that the emperor’s vast generosity is always accompanied by *modestia*, a trait that we find in the portrait of Domitian throughout the *Silvae*, and in 1.6 and 4.2 in particular.

In the Saturnalian poem, the emperor’s low profile is mentioned when the crowd acclaims the festival (vv. 81-84):

tollunt innumeras ad astra voces  
 Saturnalia principis sonantes,  
 et dulci dominum favore clamant:  
 hoc solum vetuit licere Caesar.

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<sup>494</sup> Cfr. Newlands 2002, pp. 241-242. Fabbrini 2010, pp. 251-253 stresses the importance of the exotic provenience of fruits and sweets as a symbol of Domitian’s reign as a new golden age.

<sup>495</sup> *Ibidem*.

Domitian is imagined in the act of prohibiting the audience to call him *dominus*, in open contrast with the official title of *dominus and deus* that Suetonius attributes to him<sup>496</sup>. The somehow paradoxical refusal of the name marks the idealized nature of the imperial figure, both powerful and modest at the same time<sup>497</sup>.

In *Silv.* 4.2, Domitian's presence at the dinner party seems even harder to disguise (vv. 41-44):

tranquillum vultu sed maiestate serena  
mulcentem radios summittentemque modeste  
fortunae vexilla suae; tamen ore nitebat  
dissimulatus honos. (...)

The ambiguity of the description of the imperial *persona* has made this passage one of the most debated among the scholars<sup>498</sup>. I generally agree with the interpretation of Coleman and Hulls, according to whom the combination of divine majesty, power and professed modesty corresponds to the encomiastic image promoted by the official propaganda<sup>499</sup>. As in the previous passage from *Silv.* 1.6, Domitian shows his immense power and generosity, while he paradoxically tries to hide it.

This is of course not the case of Virro in *Satire* 5, where every aspect of the dinner party is a manifestation of power and humiliation for the guests. The speaker at last invites the patron to be a better host (vv. 111-113):

(...) solum  
poscimus ut cenes *civiliter*. hoc face et esto,  
esto, ut nunc multi, dives tibi, pauper amicis.”

The passage is pivotal for interpreting the whole poem as a reflection on the patron-client dynamics. The request in fact does not imply any claim of real social equity, but the maintenance of social appearances. In other words, the patron does not need to be either kind or generous with his clients, but just *pretend* to treat them as equals on public occasions, whilst enjoying his riches in private. Pretension is a key-word in the present analysis, as it refers to a prominent feature of imperial encomia. The deterioration of social relationships shows how the lexicon of *amicitia* is no longer used in a traditional sense, but more as a façade. In this sense, particularly relevant in the passage is

<sup>496</sup> Suet. 13, 1-2. For the historical evidence of the use of this title see also the long note by Gibson 2006a, pp. 92-9 *ad* 5.1, 37.

<sup>497</sup> On this passage cfr. Newlands 2002, pp. 248-250.

<sup>498</sup> Cfr. Coleman 1988, p. 95-97 *ad loc.*, Newlands 2002, pp. 273-275 and Hulls 2007.

<sup>499</sup> Hulls 2007, p. 204: “The hidden depths of Domitian’s facial expression do not hide tyrannical thoughts but his god-like, triumphal nature”. Newlands 2002, *ibidem* prefers a more ambiguous reading of these verses.

the adverb *civiliter*, which represents a key-word of the Trajanic period. The specific meaning in the passage refers to a sense of equality at the dinner table between the patron and his client<sup>500</sup>, and responds to the evolution of the word and its cognates (*civis*, *civitas*) during the imperial age<sup>501</sup>, where the employment of such words implies a fixed ideal of moral conduct<sup>502</sup>. The increasingly hierarchical structure of Roman society in the early empire is reflected by the extreme character of literature of praise and the *indignatio* of satire.

Juvenal's accusation is not only directed to the degeneration of genuine social relationships, but needs to be read within a more general discussion on the decline of the traditional values of the *mos maiorum*. Nostalgic mentions of the old days of Rome can be traced throughout the collection<sup>503</sup> to amplify the contrast with the corrupted present. This thought seems to unfold in two main directions: the *modestia* and simple costumes of ancient rural Rome and the presence of true sentiments of *amicitia*.

In our satire, the latter idea is applied to the context of patronage and more specifically to the practice of gift-giving (vv. 108-111):

nemo petit, modicis quae mittebantur amicis  
a Seneca, quae Piso bonus, quae Cotta solebat  
largiri; namque et titulis et fascibus olim  
maior habebatur donandi gloria.

The mention of great benefactors of the past (Seneca and Piso from the Neronian period, and Cotta from the late Augustan age<sup>504</sup>) recalls a time where patrons gave gifts to their humble friends without expecting anything back. Such low profile seems particularly relevant in the convivial context, where the display of luxury represents the biggest difference from the simple dinners of past times.

However, the poet's nostalgia for the simplicity of the early years of Rome is often combined with awareness that such values could not be applicable anymore. It is the case of *Sat.* 11, where Juvenal remarks the simplicity of living of ancient Romans and compares it to the lust and excess of his times. It is evident how this satire includes themes already mentioned in previous poems (and those discussed here in particular), but I would like to draw the attention to one aspect that carries interesting connections with imperial encomium.

<sup>500</sup> TLL, p. 1219, IV, s.v. *civiliter*: schol. *ad l.* 'sine iniuria clientum'.

<sup>501</sup> For a brief survey cfr. Wallace-Hadrill 1982, pp. 43-44.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 43, starting from the *Lives* of Suetonius: "*Civilitas* describes the pattern of a good emperor, *superbia* that of a bad one."

<sup>503</sup> See Courtney 1980, pp. 24-25 for an introduction; cfr. also Cuccioli 1990.

<sup>504</sup> See Braund 1996, p. 294 and Courtney 1980, p. 244, *ad v.* 109.

In *Sat.* 11, Juvenal reprises the idea (seen in *Sat.* 5) that ancient *convivia* were based on home-grown and unsophisticated arrangements (vv. 117-127):

illa domi natas nostrarque ex arbore mensas  
tempora viderunt; hos lignum stabat ad usus,  
annosam si forte nucem deiecerat eurus.  
at nunc divitibus cenandi nulla voluptas,  
nil rhombus, nil damma sapit, putere videntur  
unguenta atque rosae, latos nisi sustinet orbis  
grande ebur et magno sublimis pardus hiatu  
dentibus ex illis quos mittit porta Syenes  
**et Mauri celeres et Mauro obscurior Indus,**  
**et quos deposuit Nabataeo belua saltu**  
**iam nimios capitique graves. (...)**

In the description of the dining setting, everything is home-made or home-grown, from the table to the food. The poet laments that such custom has been replaced by a futile taste for exotic and expensive dinner tables, without which the patron cannot even enjoy his food (*nil rhombus, nil damma sapit*). The mention of the turbot is obviously not casual, as it reminds to the subject matter of *Satire* 4, where Crispinus wants a giant turbot cooked just for himself.

The poet gives further details on how the tables of the rich have changed in time: from the humble ones made out of a chestnut tree blown down by the wind (and therefore available by nature), now the tables are made of carved ivory coming from the furthest corners of the empire. Citrus-wood and ivory are relevant here as a sign of luxury, as we find it again in *Silv.* 4.2 as one of the few details Statius provides about Domitian's *mensa* (vv. 38-39):

Sed mihi **non epulas Indisque innixa columnis**  
**robora Maurorum (...)**

The table is at the same time precious for the materials and big in size<sup>505</sup>, as it is appropriate for an imperial setting. The celebration -and legitimation- of luxury is after all one of the most characteristic traits of the *Silvae*<sup>506</sup>, but in this passage in particular it acquires a specific meaning.

Despite providing a brief description of the table, the negative *non* at the beginning of the passage anticipates the true focus of the poet's gaze: Domitian (v. 40): *ipsum, ipsum cupido tantum spectare vacavit*. The hyperbolic passage leads the poet-client to ignore the luxury he is surrounded and focus only on the figure of the emperor. This encomiastic image finds yet again an interesting

<sup>505</sup> Cfr. the excellent comments of Coleman 1988, pp. 94-95 on these verses.

<sup>506</sup> The topic is too broad to be approached here. Fundamental readings are La Rocca 1986; La Penna 1989; more specifically on the *Silvae* cfr. Corti 1991, Connors 2000, Myers 2000 and Zeiner 2006.

opposite parallel in *Satire 5*, where *spectare* is the only action that Trebius is allowed to do at the dinner table (vv.121-122; 125-127):

saltantem *spectes* et chironomunta volanti  
cultello (...)

duceris planta velut ictus ab Hercule Cacus  
et ponere foris, si quid temptaveris umquam  
hiscere (...)

Not only Trebius is not served any meat dish (the main course of the dinner), but he is forced to watch the meat being carved and be silent, under the threat of physical punishment. The two passages give yet another example of how the *Silvae* and the *Satires* might employ similar words to enhance the specific reality they refer to. It can be observed that in both context the verb carries an idea of participating (in different grades) to a spectacle<sup>507</sup>, and coherently refers to figures borrowed from the pantomime (*saltator*, *chironomos*) and adapted to the dinner context. However, if in Statius, as K. Coleman has noted, “in the context of the banquet and luxurious surroundings it is a paradox flattering Domitian that St.’s supreme desire is to keep his gaze fixed on the emperor alone”<sup>508</sup>, in the non-imperial context of the satire the verb signals the frustration of the client at the impossibility of joining in the entertainment.

In a similar way, while Juvenal mourns the old times of Rome and blames luxury as a sign of the corruption of modern times, Statius celebrates a reality of affluence and wealth and legitimizes them according to the rules of imperial encomium. The praise of modern times by court poets represents one of the most exploited *topoi* of imperial encomium. If Juvenal complains about the mythical era of Rome as an irretrievable past, Statius instead celebrates the Domitianic years as the best Rome has ever seen, as declared at the beginning of our *Silv.* 1.6 (vv. 39-42):

i nunc saecula compara, Vetustas,  
antiqui Iovis aureumque tempus:  
non sic libera vina tunc fluebant  
nec tardum seges occupabat annum.

The *topos* of the return of a new golden age is traditional<sup>509</sup>, but in the poetry of praise of Martial and Statius it acquires new connotations. The quoted passage suggests that the level of welfare under Domitian bears no comparison with the past. The image of the world presented is thus

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<sup>507</sup> Cf. *OLD*, p. 1801, 3 s.v. *specto*.

<sup>508</sup> Coleman 1988, p. 95 *ad v.* 40.

<sup>509</sup> On this theme in the early imperial age, see Nauta 2002, pp. 390 ff. and Rosati 2006, pp. 50-54.

artificial, idealized, exactly like the traditional image of natural harmony of the mythical golden age. We find similar assertions in Martial, when he claims that the Domitianic era fears no comparisons (5.19, 1-2): *si qua fides veris, praeferri, maxime Caesar/temporibus possunt saecula nulla tuis*. And again in *Ep.* 8.55, 1-2 (*temporibus nostris aetas cum cedat avorum/reverit et maior cum duce Roma suo*) and 11.5, 3-4 (*ardua res haec est, opibus non tradere mores/et, cum tot Croesos viceris, esse Numam*). The last passage in particular shows how in the idealized world of the empire, wealth (symbolized by Croesus) can still be connected with a good moral conduct (symbolized by Numa). The reality imagined by Martial finds a fitting opposite view in Juvenal.

However, if this specific encomiastic imagery created by Statius and Martial applies to the public sphere and to the imperial figure of Domitian and his court, on the other hand the epigrammatist can still lament the lack of good patrons (*Ep.* 12.36, 8-9): *Pisones Senecasque Memmiosque/et Crispos mihi redde, sed priores*, thus assuming a position similar to Juvenal's.

At this point, it could be easy to think of a neat opposition between praise and blame of modern times in the three authors. However, I hope I have showed how even when it celebrates the imperial power in an idealized way, the poetry of praise of Statius and Martial imposes such model to the emperor. The encomiasts negotiate with the political power by setting high standards to the official image of the court. If we read the *Silvae* and the *Epigrams* in this way, it will be apparent that the *Satires* aim to counteract this specific vision of the world. In other words, Juvenal is not only regretting the ancient past of Rome *per se*, but also rejecting the instrumental use of it made by encomiastic poetry.

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In this section I have examined three poems as interesting case-studies for the literary dynamics existing between the encomiasts Statius and Martial and the satirist Juvenal. The topic of dinner-invitations has proved to be particularly revealing in the context of literary and non-literary patronage.

The intertextual analysis of the fifth satire of Juvenal and the convivial poems 1.6 and 4.2 from the *Silvae* offers new perspectives for the discussion of how the two authors deal with the display of power in the specific context of dinner parties.

I have shown how in *Silv.* 4.2 the dining invitation is interpreted as an exciting privilege for the poet-client, who reciprocates Domitian's favour with an encomiastic poem to celebrate the occasion. The divine setting envisaged by the poet heightens the tones of the imperial banquet and promotes the public image of the emperor as Jupiter on earth. At the same time, such powerful interpretation of the imperial figure is associated with a humble and human conduct, as shown in

the public context of the *Saturnalia* in *Silv.* 1.6. As a consequence, the vision of the world created by Statius implies the revival of a new golden age, where there are no social boundaries, and where the emperor is powerful and generous at the same time, hence being the patron *par excellence*.

In the *Satires*, Juvenal attacks this specific idealised image of Roman society and of patron-client relationships in particular. The convivial topic of *Satire* 5 offers a very different picture from Statius'. Everything in the description of Virro and Trebius suggests their social gap, starting from the menu. Moreover, the behaviour shown by the patron corresponds to the image of the 'bad ruler', who in the microcosm of his own household acts like a monarch.

The divine allegories employed by Statius to heighten the tones of the encomium, in the satire are used to underline the preciousness of Virro's dishes and the mistreatment of Trebius<sup>510</sup>. The patron's aloofness reveals the deterioration of the social practise of exchanging *beneficia*, thus leading Juvenal to openly declare the falsity of dinner invitations (vv. 11-23; 107-113; 131-137; 168-173).

It is this last aspect which makes the present analysis relevant, as falsity paradoxically constitutes one of the bases of encomia. Juvenal's attacks on the pretence reached at all levels in Rome can be read as a literary response to the genre of panegyric, or at least as an alternative reading of what an absolute power can lead to. The ultimate aim of literature of praise, in fact, is not to celebrate reality, but to construct an ideal version of it and negotiate such a view with the political power. In this light, the intertextual 'dialogue' existing between the *Satires* and the *Silvae* becomes a useful indicator of this contradicting reality.

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<sup>510</sup> As argued very clearly by Morford 1977, p. 234.

## b. Juvenal and the literary amateurs: the problem of patronage

The social dynamics that in the *Silvae* are hidden between the lines of encomium are approached in an opposite way by Juvenal. I will examine how the poet employs the genre of satire to express his *indignatio* towards the lack of patronage in Rome. The different approaches of the two poets to the phenomenon of literary amateurs offer an interesting case-study for examining the poetic strategies employed by Statius and Juvenal in order to secure literary patronage and to maintain their role in society. Among the other causes of the decay of forms of Maecenatism, Juvenal mentions the new habit for Roman patrons to compose verses themselves (*Satire* 7), thus forcing the poet to appeal to the emperor as the only safe source of protection.

The particular idealised portrait of Roman *patroni* devoted to literary *otia* and the practise of Greek philosophy finds once again an interesting counterpart in the *Satires* of Juvenal. The attack of the satirist is directed towards members of the new Roman élite, who, according to the poet, are only devoted to luxury and maintain a general hypocritical attitude. These ideas are exploited throughout the whole collection, but are featured in *Satire* 2, and more consistently in *Satire* 7.

In *Satire* 2, the mention of the aristocrats is inserted in a more general attack on effeminate hypocrites. The poem is addressed in fact to false moralists who claim to condemn unacceptable social behaviour, while they indulge in it themselves in private. In the context of the present chapter, what is relevant is said at the beginning of the satire, when the speaker presents the first hypocrisy of the aristocrats (vv. 4-7):

*indocti* primum, quamquam plena omnia gypso  
Chrysippi invenias; nam perfectissimus horum,  
si quis Aristotelen similem vel Pittacon emit  
et iubet archetypos pluteum servare Cleanthas.

The accusation is of displaying busts of philosophers in the house as a sign of culture and education. As we have seen, Statius praises this particular aspect in the poem for Pollius Felix (*Silv.* 2.2, 63 ff.), where the presence of portraits shows the patron's love for the arts. Moreover, the artists mentioned by Statius are the most famous Greek masters (Apelles, Phidias, Myron and Polyclitus). The contrast seems to be reinforced also on a linguistic level by the opposition between the *otia docta* of Manilius Vopiscus (*Silv.* 1.3, 108-109) and the *indocti* aristocrats mentioned here by Juvenal.



In *Silv.* 2.2, 69 Statius identifies the models for Pollius Felix' life and career more broadly with generals, poets and philosophers (*ora ducum ac vatum sapientumque ora priorum*)<sup>511</sup>, according to the traditional curriculum of the Roman aristocrat. In this sense, the display of busts and statues in the house is not felt as a vain affectation, but a tribute to Roman tradition. What it is possible to argue from this comparison is that Juvenal aims to show the vanity of an act now deprived of its genuine meaning, which has become an involuntary proof of lack of education. The emphasis on Greek names on the one hand underlines 'the hypocrites' desire to appear learned'<sup>512</sup> while on the other it also acknowledges Greek influences on such behaviour.

The hostility professed against Greek culture in Rome finds its best display in *Satire* 3, where the speaker Umbricius explains his reasons for leaving the city and moving to Cumae.

The poet laments an additional threat to his condition of *cliens* in Rome, where the difficult living conditions are aggravated by the impossibility to receive honest patronage. The vast presence of amateur poets is in fact mentioned among the physical dangers of the city in an anti-climax at vv. 8-9: (...) *mille pericula saevae/urbis et Augusto recitantes mense poetas?*. The interest towards literature and arts that Statius praises in the poems dedicated to his patrons becomes here an element of threat for the professional poet who aims to pursue a literary career in Rome.

Already at vv. 41-42 Umbricius had expressed his disapproval for recitations and 'bad' poetry composed by amateur poets (often *patroni*) circulating in Rome [*"quid Romae faciam? Mentiri nescio; librum,/si malus est, nequeo laudare et poscere (...)*]. This lamentation represents a *topos* that can also be found in Martial (*Epigr.* 7.46):

Commendare tuum dum vis mihi carmine munus  
Maeonioque cupis doctius ore loqui,  
Excrucias multis pariter me teque diebus,  
Et tua de nostro, Prisce, Thalia tacet.  
Divitibus poteris musas elegosque sonantes  
Mittere: pauperibus munera πῆζ' à dato.

and Statius (*Silv.* 4.9, 1-13):

Est sane iocus iste, quod libellum  
misisti mihi, Grype, pro libello.  
urbanum tamen hoc potest videri,  
si post hoc aliquid mihi remittas;  
nam si ludere, Grype, perseveras,  
non ludis. licet, ecce, computemus.  
noster purpureus novusque charta

<sup>511</sup> Cfr. Braund 1996, pp. 138-139 *ad loc.*

<sup>512</sup> Braund 1996, p. 122 *ad vv.* 4-7.

et binis decoratus umbilicis,  
praeter me mihi constitit decussis:  
tu rosum tineis situque putrem,  
quales aut Libycis madent olivis  
aut tus Niliacum piperve servant  
aut Byzantiacos colunt lacertos

The annoyed reactions of the poets to the bad quality of the book received aim to show the unbalance of the practice of gift-giving<sup>513</sup>, and express a specific preoccupation towards the increase of amateur literature.<sup>514</sup>

Juvenal comes back to this point in his attack on Greek flatterers, in order to stress how the impossibility of pursuing a poetic career in the city is also worsened by the display of flattery built around the figures of patrons. The interesting fact expressed in these lines is that Umbricius does in fact participate in the same adulatory game with the aristocrats, but he does not succeed as well as the Greeks (vv. 92-93): *haec eadem licet et nobis laudare, sed illis/creditur*. In other words, the general demonization of the foreign element in Rome serves as an excuse for the difficult condition of the client.

The desire to leave Rome for more pleasant and secure places corresponds to the traditional rhetorical *topos* of the contrast between city and country life (vv. 4-5 *ianua Baiarum est et gratum litus amoeni/secessus*)<sup>515</sup> yet it differs from the motif as it is employed in the *Silvae*. Umbricius' resolution reflects the frustration of the client who does not succeed in securing protection; he is not a poet, and this constitutes another reason why Juvenal chooses him as a spokesperson. Despite not being directly comparable, in this sense one can appreciate Statius' strategy of including his own poetic *persona* in the world of the patrons as a successful way to guarantee literary patronage. In other words, while Umbricius acts as an outsider in society, Statius strategically pictures himself as an insider in the world he wishes to belong to.

In this direction, the most illuminating poem of Juvenal is though undoubtedly *Satire 7*, whose main theme is imperial patronage, since the only literary patronage suitable for Roman poets seems to be found in the emperor (*Sat. 7, 1 et spes et ratio studiorum in Caesare tantum*).

The situation described in the poem shows very different tones from the *Silvae* in how patronage is perceived by the poet-client of the imperial age. The decline of a structured system of support for the arts as it existed during the Augustan period is pivotal in the poem. In the poet's perspective, the lack of literary patronage affects not only the public sphere, but also the private

<sup>513</sup> I have referred to the mechanism of the exchange of *dona* in chapt. 2a, pp. 67-68 in particular.

<sup>514</sup> On the other hand, Pliny the younger mentions many figures of aristocrats who compose poetry: e.g. *Epist.* 5.3, 3-6; 7.9, 9-14. For Pliny's own representation as a poet as a secondary activity to oratory, cfr. Herskowitz 1995.

<sup>515</sup> Cfr. Braund 1996, p. 230 ff. with bibliography.

dimension of the recitations and literature for occasions. It is easy to see how the reality portrayed by the satirist can be opposed to the world of the *Silvae*, in which both imperial and private patronage is widely displayed.

In the context of this chapter, Juvenal resorts to appeal to the emperor as the only hope left for poets in Rome. Even if the dating of the *Satire* would suggest that the Caesar mentioned is Hadrian, nonetheless he functions more likely as an imperial *persona* to whom the poet appeals.<sup>516</sup>

The idea that the only possibility for composing literature is to do it for the imperial court leads to the second main argument of the poem, the decline of private patronage<sup>517</sup>. In the context of the present analysis, it will be clear how the different genres (encomiastic literature, epigram and satire) offer a very interpretative view of the same reality. However, the strategy of negotiation employed by Statius and Martial (who yet does not avoid bitter remarks on some aristocrats) reveals the difficulties of creating a new form of patronage, both inside and outside the imperial court.

The figures of private patrons once again find their space also in *Satire 7*, where the *indignatio* of the poet is pointed at them as examples of the decay of patronage. The first accusation is of avarice (vv. 30-35):

(...) didicit iam dives avarus  
tantum admirari, tantum laudare disertos,  
ut pueri Iunonis avem. Sed defluit aetas  
et pelagi patiens et cassidis atque ligonis.  
Taedia tunc subeunt animos, tunc seque suamque  
Terpsichoren odit facunda et nuda senectus.

The *dives avarus* is accused of giving only praise and not any real compensation to artists (*disertos*), who can aspire to a successful (*facunda*) but vulnerable (*nuda*) literary career. The final point of the passage in fact underlines the precariousness of literary activity compared to other fields where protection is not needed.

Among the threats faced by the professional poet, Juvenal acknowledges amateur poetry, especially when composed by the Roman élite. The artistic sensitivity that in Statius acts as a guarantee of literary patronage is here presented as a subtle way to refuse any form of monetary support to the artists (vv. 36-39):

accipe nunc artes. ne quid tibi conferat iste,  
quem colis et Musarum et Apollinis aede relictas,

<sup>516</sup> As stated by Stramaglia 2008, p. 119. For other interpretations see Bartsch 1994, pp. 141-145.

<sup>517</sup> Bartsch 1994, pp. 129-130 and *passim* outlines the various explanations given by scholars for the discrepancy existing between the introductory appeal to the emperor and the lamentation about private patronage that occupies the rest of the poem.

ipse facit versus atque uni cedit Homero  
propter mille annos (...)

In this paradoxical view, the patrons engage in the same intellectual activities of the professional poets for their own pleasure, therefore jeopardizing any chance of material compensation for the artists. According to this interpretation, the literary activities of leisure that so much praise have in the *Silvae*, are here read as an obstacle to patronage.

In vv. 39-42, Juvenal remarks another aspect of the decline of the interest of the Roman rich patrons for artists, when he describes the venues in which the *recitationes* take place:

(...) et si dulcedine famae  
succensus recites, maculosas commodat aedes.  
haec longe ferrata domus servire iubetur  
in qua sollicitas imitatur ianua portas.

It is clear how the environment is very different from the setting of the *villae* described in the *Silvae*. In this passage, the patron hosts poetic displays and readings in a house belonging to him, which however is in decay (*maculosas...aedes*) and rarely used (*sollicitas...portas*). The generosity symbolized by the huge, open villas of Manilius Vopiscus and Pollius Felix in the *Silvae* leaves here space to the lack of interest of the rich patrons for forms of Maecenatism. However, one should not necessarily take the equation too far, and identify the house described by Juvenal with its owner (as in the *Silvae*); the purpose of the satirist is to show the stinginess of the patron and the difficulties of being a poet-client in Rome. As we have seen, the task Statius imposes to himself as a professional poet is different, as he tailors the praise to his addressees in order to secure their support.

Moreover, the figures of Manilius Vopiscus and Pollius Felix I have analysed previously are presented by Statius as rich patrons who have retired to their own villas to enjoy a quiet life to cultivate their own literary and philosophical interests. In a way, Statius presents his addressees as a new type of poet, who can indulge in the pleasures of composing verses in a modern *locus amoenus*, free from material preoccupations. However, this state of *quies* is not achieved through a detachment from worldly values, but through the comforts of a wealthy life. This new type of poet reveals the modernity of Statius' poetic strategy of praising the new values of the empire.

In the years following the Flavians, the new reality of poetic private and public performances is interpreted by Juvenal from a different perspective. In *Satire 7*, his lamentation for the lack of patronage counteracts the ideal model of the amateur poet created by Statius. The satirist

in fact polemically describes a model of *vates* and a way of composing poetry no longer possible in Rome (vv. 53-62):

sed vatem egregium, cui non sit publica vena,  
qui nihil expositum soleat deducere, nec qui  
communi feriat carmen triviale moneta,  
hunc, qualem nequeo monstrare et sentio tantum,  
***anxietate carens animus facit, omnis acerbi***  
***inpatiens***, cupidus silvarum aptusque bibendis  
fontibus Aonidum. neque enim cantare sub antro  
Pierio thyrsusque potest contingere maesta  
paupertas atque aeris inops, quo nocte dieque  
corpus eget: satur est cum dicit Horatius 'euhoe.'

The equation between economic stability and poetic composition is remarked by Juvenal as the necessary condition for the professional poet to pursue his activity. What remains implicit in Statius for the rules imposed by the encomiastic genre is transformed in the hands of the satirist into an open bitter remark.

The comparison of the two models (the poet-client and the amateur poet) as presented by Statius and Juvenal is relevant as it shows how the traditional idea of *vates* can be interpreted in different ways in order to promote oneself and/or praise the *laudandus*.

It has already been noted how Statius develops the model of the *vates* in the *Silvae*<sup>518</sup>, but in the context of an intertextual examination of *Satire* 7, the figure of the poet shows some peculiar features. The necessity of *ataraxia*, as seen in Statius, returns in the words of the satirist (*anxietate carens*) to define a material condition for the poet to gain inspiration. Oddly enough, the state of inner *quies* that in the villa-poems allows the patrons to pursue literary interests represents what traditionally distinguishes the poet from other men<sup>519</sup>. In a way, the idealized scenario envisaged by Statius for his patrons symbolizes what is instead missing (and vital) in the life of the professional poet. The search for inspiration in the quiet of natural environments (*cupidus silvarum*) reminds again of a Callimachean idea of poetry as a privileged activity, which is so well achieved by the patrons in the *Silvae*, but not possible for the speaker of the *Satire*. The last ironic remark made in the passage by Juvenal about Horace underlines once more the anachronistic nature of the model of poet-*vates* traditionally intended and no longer applicable. Among the poets mentioned as examples

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<sup>518</sup> See p. 169, n. 433.

<sup>519</sup> Stramaglia 2008, p. 148 ad vv. 53-62 notes how Juvenal must have had in mind the definitions of the ideal orator and poet made by Cicero and Horace respectively. The whole passage has clear Callimachean echoes (cfr. *Aet.*, fr. 1, 25-28 and *Ep.* 28, 1-2 Pfeiffer).

of a type of poetic activity no longer possible (Virgil, Horace and Lucan are evoked even if they had been dead for a long time), a comment must be made on the mention of Statius at vv. 82-87:

curritur ad vocem iucundam et carmen amicae  
Thebaidos, laetam cum fecit Statius urbem  
promisitque diem: tanta dulcedine captos  
adficit ille animos tantaque libidine volgi  
auditur. sed cum fregit subsellia versu  
esurit, intactam Paridi nisi vendit Agaven.

The Flavian poet is recalled as an example of the dichotomy existing in the life of the professional poet: composing poetic masterpieces (*amicae/Thebaidos*) and selling poetry as a mean of living (*intactam...vendit Agaven*) to Paris, mentioned here as the symbol of popular entertainment. These lines have been interpreted as a negative attitude of Juvenal towards Statius<sup>520</sup>, but the passage is more ironical: the suggestion here in fact is that ‘high’ poetry like the *Thebaid*, despite its success, fails to be as lucrative as other art forms like the pantomime. It will become clear from these verses how Statius the encomiast and Juvenal the satirist makes a very different use of the poetic medium to negotiate their role in society.

The harsh reality of private patronage leads Juvenal to appeal to the emperor and encourage new forms of Maecenatism. The appeal echoes a specific imperial image developed in court poetry (*e. g. v. 21 ducis indulgentia*), that has been interpreted either as a serious attempt to gain the imperial favour, or as deeply ironical<sup>521</sup>. If this dichotomy seems unresolvable<sup>522</sup>, it shows at least how a specific language of encomium was perceived as the most effective for the career of the professional court poet. In the end, despite the negative portrait in the satire, the model of Statius does emerge as the most successful when writing for the court.<sup>523</sup>

Statius builds his own poetic strategy in order to maintain his role of professional poet (both of epic and encomia) in these new dynamics of *amicitia* and power. The poems I have analysed in

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<sup>520</sup> Bartsch 1994, pp. 130-133 offers a thorough analysis of the linguistic interpretations of this passage, aimed to portray Statius as a ‘pimp’ to his poetry. She rightly argues (p. 133) that “although Statius is presented as emblematic of the situation of poets when the emperor is not a patron, he is the prime example of a patronized poet”. See also Newlands 2012, pp. 24-26.

<sup>521</sup> Cfr. Bartsch 1994, pp. 134-135 (with notes).

<sup>522</sup> At the end of her chapter dedicated to the Satire, Bartsch 1994, p. 141 argues that “perhaps it is just possible that it is the very clash of the two that is the poem’s strategy. (...) rather it is the authorial persona, Satire’s 7 speaking poet, that renders the poem unstable. This is a crucial point: the “devastating send-up” occurs only because the voice of Satire 7 is that of a court poet himself (...)”.

<sup>523</sup> On a side note, I do not agree with Bartsch 1994, pp. 140-141 when she argues that the *Thebaid* “actually opens with verses that flatter Domitian for his successful military exploits (*Theb.* 1, 17 ff.). Caesar’s patronage, most notably in the case of Domitian, spurred Martial poetry about his exploits that also found support in a more public and official medium.” The *recusatio* in the passage quoted shows how Statius prefers to write about mythological epic rather than compose verses celebrating the military successes of Domitian. It is not imperial flattery, but a fine declaration of poetic independence. Cfr. Rosati 2002a and Rosati 2008.

this chapter show how the encomiast can turn the new phenomenon of literary amateurs from a dangerous threat to his own poetic activity to a new vision of the world. Virtue, nobility and wealth characterize the ideal aristocrat. By praising his patrons as educated and cultured men, Statius manages to associate them closely to the art he identifies himself with. The representation given by Juvenal, instead, portrays ‘empty’ models of aristocrats, whose noble origin does not correspond to the possession of any virtue (*Sat.* 8, 19-20 *tota licet veteres exornent undique cerae/atria, nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus*).

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After the great era of the Augustan age, the crisis of literary patronage (public and private) leads the poets to use the poetic medium to express their discomfort or to encourage new forms of intellectual activities. In this analysis I have shown how Statius and Juvenal personally develop their own poetic strategy to gain protection from the Roman nobility or the emperor. The Neapolitan poet creates an idealized world where his patrons enjoy intellectual activities such as philosophy and poetry, thus making them the perfect recipients for his encomia. In this way, we have seen how Statius conjugates the best of Roman tradition with the new values of the empire, thus negotiating his own role of encomiastic poet and client. Statius manages to create an ideal vision of the world where amateur poets and professional poets can coexist in a dimension of mutual collaboration.

In the *Satires* I have analysed, Juvenal employs the tool of *indignatio* to describe the reality of professional poets in the imperial age. Influences from the East and Greece are seen as a threat to Rome, whilst the practice of public *recitationes* and private forms of poetic composition by the Roman aristocracy are interpreted as the greatest obstacles for the poet-clients.

The parallel analysis of the two poets is fundamental for the understanding of the dynamics existing between literature and power, and the way poetry negotiates its own role in society. More specifically, I hope it will be apparent how the intertextual examination of the *Silvae* reveals once more the intricate nature of this piece of literature, which so successfully managed to adapt to the new (and often difficult) reality of making literature in imperial Rome.

## Conclusions

My approach to the *Silvae* of Statius aims to offer a new interpretation of the language of encomium as a sophisticated and witty way for the poet to engage with the socio-political frame of the Domitianic era. The main instrument of investigation has been the analysis of the language of encomium in selected poems of this collection of occasional poetry. The examination of the strategy of praise in such a varied literary context has revealed recurring patterns in vocabulary, style, *formulae*, imagery, as well as more specific characteristics of the occasions which inspired the individual compositions.

In the first chapter of the thesis, the analysis has focused on the imperial theme and the representation of the figure of Domitian. In the discussion of the first group of poems ( 4.3, 4.1 and 1.1), the close examination of the encomiastic speeches delivered by mythical spokespersons directly to the emperor has revealed how the linguistic pattern underlines the divine representation of the imperial figure, addressed as Jupiter on earth and *pater patriae*. In this sense, the epic paratext of the *Aeneid* in particular plays a fundamental role in projecting Domitian in the mythical and historical tradition of Rome. Moreover, the constant dialogue with the Augustan models (Virgil and Ovid) heightens the poetic role of Statius as imperial panegyrist. With a strategy reminiscent of Callimachus, the Flavian poet adapts characters of the Roman tradition to the new reality of the empire (Janus; the Sibyl), and creates an interesting opposition between their straight speeches and their humorous appearance (Curtius; Janus; Voltumnus). I have shown how this *variatio* does not prevent the encomia from displaying traditional *topoi* of the genre, like the theme of the *serus in caelum redeas*, the wish for longevity, the assimilation of the emperor to a *sidus*, the superiority to Jupiter, and the divine transfiguration of reality.

This last element is pivotal in the main argument that identifies Statius' encomiastic strategy as a witty and sophisticated game with his addressees. My analysis of *Silv.* 4.2 has read the transfiguration of Domitian as a specific encomiastic strategy, thus rejecting any subversive meaning of the ambiguous language operating here. The representation of the emperor and the court in a divinized, transfigured way projects a specific model of power that Domitian promoted and had to fulfill. In this negotiation between the poet and the court, I have analysed the poem within the logic of the exchange of *beneficia*, and identified in this strategy the reason behind the transfigured character of the poem. In order to be a thanksgiving for an invitation to an imperial banquet, the poem needs in fact to show the typical 'extreme' features of poetry for a ruler. The promotion through poetry of an idealized model of sovereign reveals the influence of encomia on the propaganda of power.



The second chapter dedicated to imperial themes has dealt with more indirect allusions to Domitian. The analysis of poems dedicated to people belonging to the circuits of the court has shown different aspects of Statius' encomiastic strategy. In line with the motif of the transfiguration of the imperial figure, the character of Earinus in *Silv.* 3.4 has been interpreted within the process of aestheticisation of reality typical of the imperial period, and therefore I have argued that his main poetical functions is to reflect and promote the propagandistic motif of the emperor's perfection.

The success of a ruler is also proved by the devotion of his entourage. In examining the other three poems in this section (1.4, 1.2 and 5.1), my analysis has followed two main directions. On the one hand, the praise for the emperor is mediated through the encomium of the direct addressees and expressed through their own words (*Silv.* 5.1 especially); in this way, the mechanism of employing spokespersons for the delivery of the imperial praise follows an original effect of *variatio*. On the other hand, I have examined how this strategy allows Statius to heighten the medium of poetry as the ideal platform for promoting a vision of the world that brings together the emperor, the court and the citizens. In other words, by expressing the dedication of Rome to Domitian, the poet imposes public expectations that the political power needs to fulfill.

The second aspect I have focused on in this chapter relates more closely to the role that Statius reserves for himself. In particular in the poems dedicated to Arruntius Stella and Rutilius Gallicus (1.2 and 1.4 respectively), the poet stresses the intimacy with his recipients by employing expressions borrowed from elegiac poetry. Moreover, being the two characters also engaged in literary activities, the use of the language of *amor* and *amicitia* creates a powerful connection between the poet and his literary patrons. Finally, the presence of female figures in *Silv.* 1.2 and 5.1 introduces another level of the encomium. I have shown how the figures of Violentilla and Priscilla correspond to the 'paradoxical portrait' typical of encomia, and present a combination of the erotic beauty of the elegiac *puella* with the traditional morality of the *matrona*. Once again, I have argued that the presentation of idealized portraits responds to the encomiastic strategy of adapting traditional *topoi* (and literary genres like elegy) to the new reality of the empire.

The third chapter of the thesis has focused on the private sphere of the *Silvae*. The aim was to show how Statius consistently employs a similar language used for the imperial eulogies also for private contexts of praise. The selection of poems has demonstrated how the strategies of encomium move across genres. This is the case of *Silv.* 2.1, where the young slave Glaucias combines specific features of the ephebe of epic with the delicate traits of the *pueri delicati* and the elegiac *puellae*. As for the female figures in *Silv.* 1.2 and 5.1, I have argued that this idealized portrait heightens the praise of the addressee Atedius Melior, while at the same time it creates a free dimension in which the master and slave act like father and son, and mourning for the death of a slave is legitimised.

The construction of the encomium through expressions borrowed from erotic poetry has been the focus of my reading of *Silv.* 3.2. I have noted how Statius' encomiastic version of the *propemptikon* owes some of its features to the *Panegyricus Messallae*, which shows already a combination of elegiac expressions and encomiastic aims. Finally, the reflections on the poet's personal relationship with the recipient of the poem, Maecius Celer, have shown how Statius humorously draws attention to his own poetic activity as opposed to the military career of his patron.

The last chapter has been dedicated to the intertextual analysis of Statius and Juvenal on two specific themes: dinner invitations and patronage. In the first section, I have discussed *Satire* 5 and *Silv.* 1.6 and 4.2 in an intertextual context. I have shown how Statius and Juvenal refer to two opposite models of host for the description of the patron-client relationship in the specific occasion of a dinner party. In the case of Statius, the encomiastic frame conditions the idealized representation of Domitian as a generous, earthly but yet divine host. On the contrary, I have argued that Juvenal refers to an anachronistic model of the tyrant (especially after Pliny's *Panegyricus*) for his depiction of the patron Virro.

Finally, in the last section of the last chapter, I have analysed how Juvenal laments the harsh reality of public recitations and the spreading of literary dilettanti as the worst enemies for the professional poet. In chapter III I have argued that Statius negotiates his own role of professional encomiast and poet without necessarily looking with disdain at amateur manifestations of his own art. In *Satire* 7, the emperor is identified as the only true patron of arts; however, Juvenal's remarks on the difficulty of obtaining patronage are combined with an acknowledgment of who was, in fact, a successful example of securing literary success: Statius.

The scope of this final comparison between Statius and Juvenal on selected themes constitutes only an initial approach to a possible broader discussion of encomiastic and satirical poetry. This could in fact represent a further step in Statian studies, and I hope that my reflections can represent a starting point for further research in this direction.

Moving in the opposite direction, looking back at Statius' models, another aspect of the *Silvae* I could not include in this work refers to the impact of Callimachus and his poetic theory, with obvious references to the synthesis made by the Augustan poets (and Horace in particular). The consistent references of Statius to his own poetic activity and his conscience as a poet have been discussed already by Gianpiero Rosati in a very recent article<sup>524</sup>, as a proof of the relevance of this theme in the recent directions of Statian studies. Therefore, the metapoetic discourse of the

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<sup>524</sup> Rosati 2012.

*Silvae* seems to be a promising area of investigation, and proves that this rich collection of poems is more than just poetry for occasions, but offers a unique interpretation of the reality of the empire.

I would like to conclude this analysis of the language of encomium in the *Silvae* with some reflections on more modern parallels. The language of praise represents in fact an important aspect of any culture that deals with an autocratic power. As a matter of fact, the success of a political leadership is always based also on its propaganda<sup>525</sup>, which is essential for the acknowledgment of the ruler's authority. As we have seen however, the 'mediated persona', as defined by Evans-Hesmondhalgh<sup>526</sup>, does not necessarily correspond to reality, but is more often replaced by a fictitious representation. In the case of Domitianic culture, the acknowledgment of the imperial power as an absolute monarchy seems to be set within the boundaries of a pretended reality such as the idealized world of the *Silvae*. It is only in such a transfigured world that Domitian can be addressed as *rex magne* by Statius (*Silv.* 4.1, 46) without incurring negative connotations<sup>527</sup>. A famous modern example of an extreme pretence of divine kingship is represented by king Louis XIV, or 'the Sun king', who managed to establish a cult of his royal persona. I should point out however that the French king had the doctrine of the divine right of kings as a basis of his power, while Domitian promoted a 'divine' status for himself. In either way, the artificiality of the public display of power is ultimately another example of Seneca's idea that the praise for a tyrant is the most true when it is false. However, as we have seen in the Domitianic propaganda, even in the extravagant reign of Louis XIV the pretence of a power that is autocratic but also benevolent is maintained: the selflessness of the sovereign and the love for his subjects are still effective *topoi* of the king's reign. Moreover, Louis XIV was also famous for staging public popular rejoicings for French victories to look as though they were spontaneous manifestations of loyalty. It will be apparent here how extravagance and artificial praise become paradoxically true proof of a successful leadership.

I would like to bring my conclusion to an end with some reflections on the present time. A similar approach in fact seems to apply to modern celebrity culture, according to which private life becomes public, and celebrities are praised for being different *and* similar to the common people at the same time. In some extreme cases (especially in the world of acting), actors and actresses end being identified with their characters in the public perception, to the point that their true identity is somehow lost. This sense of loss of identity is summarized in a famous quote by Cary Grant: "Everyone wants to be Cary Grant. I want to be Cary Grant"<sup>528</sup>.

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<sup>525</sup> Evans-Hesmondhalgh 2005, pp. 17-23 for a general introduction of media and celebrity culture.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>527</sup> See p. 53 for the discussion on this verse.

<sup>528</sup> Re-quoted in Evans-Hesmondhalgh 2005, p. 17.

With these final remarks, I hope I have showed how every manifestation of power cannot be disjoined from its cultural (and literary) manifestations. I hope that my analysis of the power dynamics in Statius' *Silvae* will also offer a useful methodological approach more broadly to the studies of the power dynamics between literature and politics.

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